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'A439'

BEING THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A PIANO

'A439'

BEING THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A PIANO

BY

TWENTY-FIVE MUSICAL SCRIBES

98974

Written with a hope that the profits on the sale of this book may yield a considerable sum for the funds of the Incorporated Society of Musicians' Orphanage

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TO

MY TUNERS

GOOD, BAD, AND INDIFFERENT

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EDITOR—ALGERNON ROSE.

'A439'

THE PROLOGUE

BY CHARLES VINCENT
(Mus. Doc. Oxon., Hon. Secy. London Section, I.S.M.)

IN the month of August last, like a few other overworked mortals, I managed to get a short respite from toil, and spent my vacation on the north-west coast of Kent. The weather was particularly fine, and but for the unusual number of flies I should have considered the conditions for rest and recuperation almost perfect.

One lovely day, in the middle of the month, I wasted the morning in trying to add a new number to a Cantata I was writing, and, having spoiled enough MS. paper to satisfy my conscience that I had done some work, I started off to my favourite spot on the sea-cliff. I soon reached my destination, and lay down on the slope of a cliff that slanted away to the sea, watching the grey-green rustling roll of the never-weary waters, and punctuating my thoughts with puffs of smoke (a mixture of Log Cabin and Myrtle Grove!) I felt at peace with all mankind, and even forgot that there were such things in existence as examinations, or unresolved discords.

A439

A light fleecy cloud, floating across the horizon, attracted my attention owing to its unusual shape. I watched it with a feeling akin to fascination. When it came directly opposite to me it appeared to be arrested in its course, and though the few clouds in the sky kept floating by, this particular one remained quite stationary. I wondered at the marvellous sight, and pondered what could cause this untoward event, keeping my gaze steadfastly fixed on the cloud, which appeared to be altering in shape in a curious manner. After a few moments the movements seemed to cease, and there was the cloud apparently fixed in the blue sky in the form of a large capital

Had I simply beheld such a fantastic formation without having had my attention riveted to the particular spot by the stoppage of the cloud on its onward course, I should have remarked the curious coincidence, and have referred to it afterwards as one of the strangest sights I had ever seen; but having observed the cloud stop before me, and then distinctly form into the shape of a letter, I felt I was chosen in a wonderful way to be the recipient of some strange revelation.

In consequence I took out my notebook and sketched in the letter, and with almost breathless anxiety gazed into the sky waiting for further developments.

In a few minutes the '*A*' gradually dissolved into an

indistinct cloud mass, which kept moving about as if stirred by some invisible hand, till it began again to assume a definite shape, which took the form of a large and ultimately distinct

There could be no doubt about it: it was as clear as the A had been, and gradually faded away in the same manner, and again re-formed into the figure

This was followed after a short interval by a

and though I waited fully a couple of hours, earnestly gazing into the sky, nothing more appeared, and I was left to find the key to the mystery, the interpretation of the vision. My mind kept turning over every possible solution of the enigma. What did

mean?

What could it mean?

I had made no mistake about the signs, for I sketched each as it appeared. After vainly seeking for a solution, I half convinced myself that I must have seen a mirage, though certainly it was not like those I saw in Egypt while steaming down the Red Sea. Nevertheless, the mirage theory offered the only possible rational explanation of the curious phenomena. For several days afterwards I haunted the spot, and ran the risk of damaging my eyesight by so steadfastly gazing into the sky, but no additional sign of any kind appeared.

What *could* the combination of 'A439' mean? I felt it to be my duty to find out, if possible, and to reveal to the world at large the result of my labours.

For weeks I had worked to solve the problem, and everything musical and unmusical had been tried in vain till one day, after my return to town, I received an official-looking envelope which I had a premonition contained something important.

Imagine my feelings, amounting almost to consternation, on reading a note worded as follows:

"We have changed the title of our book to 'A439,' and will you write us a prologue?"

I was found about an hour afterwards, in a state of collapse; the shock had completely unnerved me. The solution of this revelation was so sudden, that for several days I went about my avocations in a semi-dazed manner, and it is only now, after the lapse of a couple of weeks, that I am able to carry out my intention to write the prologue, and thus inform the

world of the significance and importance of that mysterious 'A439.'

The book, let me first say, is on a musical subject.

It was suggested at a Musical Conference at Plymouth in the presence of exactly 439 members of the Incorporated Society of Musicians.

Add 4—3—9 together, and the total is 16. The occasion was the Society's sixteenth birthday.

Surely it is a good omen for this book to bear such a title.

But neither the fact of 439 members being present, nor the sixteenth birthday, had to do with the figures which represent the title of the book. The 'A' refers to the musical note which occupies the second space on the treble staff. To obtain this note it is necessary for a pianoforte string to vibrate 439 times per second in a temperature of 68 degrees Fahrenheit, and this story is entitled 'A439' because it is the autobiography of a piano tuned to that pitch.

There is a fascination in numbers, and 'A439' will doubtless suggest many thoughts to the reader.

In music, the numbers 4 and 3—9 are typical of quadruple and triple time. It is therefore appropriate that, if this story begins 'on all fours,' it should end with a triple wedding—but I must not anticipate. Again, 4 plus 3 typify the seven notes of our scale.

Pythagoras looked on 4 as perfection, it being the first square, $2 \times 2 = 4$. He regarded 3 as perfect harmony, that number being the first unison of unity and diversity. Then perfect harmony (3) multiplied by the trinity equals 9. Thus, according to the musical Greeks, 439 would have been regarded as most propitious.

If we take A as equalling the figure 1, and turn to

the year 1439 in our musical histories, we find that at that time the first period of the Netherland School of Music was flourishing. It is appropriate, therefore, that in this book there should be one chapter by a Dutch writer.

Perhaps I have said enough about 'A439.' I could say a good deal more about these numbers, but my object is to arouse the curiosity of the reader instead of wearying him.

Those of us who are familiar with English musical literature are painfully aware that we possess very few books indeed of healthy musical fiction. If music is alluded to in fiction, it is almost always maltreated. Whereas the soldier has his Kipling, the sailor his Marryat, the scientific man his Jules Verne, who have popularised and ennobled their respective professions in the pages of fiction, the author has yet to arise who will set the world talking by a series of powerful and well-written musical novels.

That there are plenty of musical scribes this book will demonstrate, because each chapter in it is written by a different author. These authors, be it noted, are not necessarily members of the Society to which the Orphanage belongs, for, inasmuch as that Institution is ready to succour the orphans of all musicians, so have many friends of little children, who are not members of our Society, united in contributing, *con amore*, the following chapters.

Now, when men and women of distinguished musical ability unite in telling an entertaining story, whatever the merits or demerits of that story may be, it can hardly fail to attract the attention of the thousands of music lovers in English-speaking countries.

I venture to prophesy, however, that if the names attract in the first instance, the story itself will attract the reader to such an extent that he will be unable to lay it down until he has read every word of it.

And let us hope that, by the sale of this book, the Musicians' Orphanage shall realise a profit of at least £439.

I

HOW I 'FOUND' MYSELF

BY THE EDITOR

THE modern art of egotistical scribbling triumphs over ancient genius; and the triumph culminates in this autobiography.

About Me there is something very bewitching. In my pianissimo tones there is infinite pathos; in my fortissimos there is a grandeur unspeakable, provided the musician has the ability to bring it out. Some day—a day long far distant—my beauty may perish. For that reason will I now embalm—by means of a quill plectrum—a knowledge of the spirit which is within me, for the benefit of posterity.

That the virtues of a Modern Concert Grand have hitherto been unrecorded is infamous. It is disgraceful that I, who am the outcome of centuries of thought and skill, should have, perforce, to enlighten the world about my significant self.

In condescending to take up the pen—for my own glorification—I, nevertheless, feel some misgiving. For being a highly cultivated, intellectual, and exceedingly moral concert grand, I am not unmindful of the tons of rubbish which are written daily, of the well-meaning but misguided book-publishers who disseminate such

pabulum broadcast, and of the myriad multitudes who devour that trash eagerly. Bookmen, therefore, may look askance at the new vein of thought I am about to open up to dwellers on this earth. Nevertheless, the supreme moments of bliss I have experienced, and the wicked treatment to which at times I have been subjected, will be revealed in a style of such delicate beauty that men will marvel, and the trees will clap their branches together in ecstasy, to the discomfiture of the sparrows thereon roosting.

To the human reader, who knows not the secret, or hidden, meaning of things, let me say, *imprimis*, that the Modern Concert Grand is the glory of the world. Choose your piano as you would choose your religion.

It requires more than mere genius to be a good piano. Any child can be good if it has its own way. But a piano born bad can never make itself good, although all the hymns in Christendom be played on its keys all day during thirty-six years.

Some pianos, thinking foolishly that they can change their nature, give their brains much unnecessary exercise. An old busk of a piano I knew, born a bichord and afterwards transmogrified into a trichord, had a rooted belief that, if it could contrive to get damp and rusty, it could evolve itself into a hurdy-gurdy. Another piano-acquaintance of mine, that delighted in music-hall songs, was of opinion that Nature intended it to be a banjo, and was always yearning for the tickling sensation of tissue paper over its strings.

To meet such simple-minded instruments is interesting. One hates this pianist, and another is in love with that. There is no piano so poor in tone that has not had its little romance, and does not boast that,

at a certain period of its existence, it has not been beloved of a musical genius. Yet, if we have our times of rapture, think of the misery we *good* pianos at other times endure. Think of our feelings—yes, we *have* feelings—when, after enabling a player, through our glorious tone, to get through a Beethoven sonata in public without breaking down, we find him applauded to the echo, and ourselves slighted and shut down with a bang.

This treatment is iniquitous: for it is the instrument which has won the success, and not the pianist. Indifferent pianists who play on me may as well note this fact, and bow to me, as well as the audience, in future, instead of taking the entire credit to themselves.

Of all unfortunate pianos, the unhappiest is the good instrument which belongs to a bad player. He (the player) would die on the spot with horror, could he realise the contempt which the good piano has for him. I would rather be steamed on a railway, or blistered by a fire, than belong to such a person. Of course an indifferent player cannot always be blamed for his imperfections. Very well, then; let such a pianist regard this maxim: if you cannot play well, acknowledge it to your instrument and beg its indulgence. Remember that a judicious piano—such as I am—has the whip hand over the player; therefore never try to humbug a piano by pretending that you can play cleverly when you cannot.

A Grand Square I once knew, being offended with a young piano-thumper, paid the charlatan out by collapsing in such a manner, in the middle of the 'Harmonious Blacksmith' variations, as to spoil that player's reputation for ever.

By these wise words of mine, it will be perceived that

nothing is so beneficial to a young pianist as the advice of a Concert Grand, whose judgment stands, constitutionally, at philharmonic pitch. I was born at that pitch—the 'new' philharmonic, not the old—and the temperature at the time was 68 degrees Fahrenheit. So they christened me 'A439,' and stuck a label on me, so that people should remember my name.

My birth immediately affected my habits and tastes in life. I have been migratory in consequence, so that I am not only familiar with the principal railway lines in the kingdom, and the peculiar draughts of most concert platforms, but with the winding and dangerous staircases leading up to both the platforms and the draughts.

With all modesty, let me say that the Graces smiled on my birth, and declared me to be superior to any man; for, whereas men have two legs, I, being a concert grand, was blessed with three. The Three Graces declared me, also, to be superior to the misnamed 'King of instruments'; for, whereas every church organ will confess that he can only fulfil his destiny in the place that gave him birth, I have been fulfilling *my* destiny by going abroad in the world to preach the gospel of Music to every music-loving creature of any consequence.

As far, however, as birth is concerned, the happiest piano is that instrument which has least occasion to think about the time of its first 'assembling' together. There is a mingled feeling of rapture and awe in every piano at the memorable moment it 'finds' itself, or, technically, 'settles down'; but, prior to its actual completion or birth, it passes through a sub-conscious period which is, sometimes, a time of terrible nightmare.

Truly, a piano's birth is a lottery. Unlike a man, a

piano has no mother: hence men, though less worthy, are more fortunate than a piano.

Human anatomy, I understand, develops itself from a germ; and the bones, muscles, and skin of a man grow gradually and painlessly so far as he is concerned. Not so with a piano. The tortures some pianos endure in their sub-conscious state, before birth, man knows nothing about.

Our bodies consist of timber, metal, glue, cloth, leather, and many other materials. Instead of bones we have bracings of wood, iron, or steel; instead of muscles we have strings, sounding-board, and action; and, instead of skin, we have the most beautifully-figured and polished veneer.

The adjustment of these things is often excruciatingly painful: but a piano bears all its agonies with silent fortitude, except when being 'chipped' up, as it is perfectly excusable, at that time, to cry out.

It is because the piano is sensible, and knows that whatever increases its durability and adds to the charm of its tone—in the way of timber, metal, glue, or cloth—is to be welcomed, that it bears its early miseries so bravely. No mortal man can conceive what those miseries are. Various parts of the unfinished piano whisper strange stories. My back reiterated quaint tales of the hills, and of forest lovers, and lectured learnedly on the peculiarities of timber growth. That, I did not mind. But the experiences of wood-seasoning, and steaming, and drying in hot-rooms, were too ghastly. Before my back ceased troubling me, I was of opinion that its proper place was in Tussaud's 'Chamber of Horrors,' for its reminiscences of *boiling glue* were terrible, and its experiences of *steam saws* and *planing machines* were gruesome in the extreme.

My palpitating, resonant, resinous sound-board did nothing, day after day, but grizzle and quiver over similar memories. I pitied my sound-board at first, but felt inclined to thump it, after it had throbbed with emotion without intermission during three consecutive months. But, if my woodwork bothered me, my metal framing was a greater trouble.

Do you, gentle reader, know what it is to hear a strong steel frame cry? Heaven grant you never may. When my steel frame recalled its molten days, the thunder in my inside was deafening. Truly, it had cause to complain of the ignominious treatment to which it had been subjected. Nevertheless, my steel frame had a reward for its sufferings in the glorious golden way in which it was subsequently japanned.

My *strings* were the real cause of the agonies of the framing, as they pulled with an aggregate tension of over thirty tons. Yet, strange to say, each separate string considered itself a martyr! Beginning in the treble and going down to the bass, each string had its own tale of woe to tell; each tale being more heart-rending than the preceding one, as the tension increased. Never were Smithfield martyrs racked and stretched as my strings professed to be. And then, my precious keys! How they chattered and clattered like a lot of half-starved monkeys over a Tamil bungalow. My pedal feet, too, had each its particular and irrepressible squeak.

All these gibberings, wranglings, growlings, and wailings, which used to go on within me, previous to my actual birth, I can remember in a hazy, uncomfortable way. But it was not until my 'action,' or brain, was inserted, that the noises became most bewildering. What a confusion of tongues there was!

The Tower of Babel was as a Tower of Silence when compared with my internal economy.

"Where the Wagner are *you* coming to?" squeaked my 'front pin' to the middle C key, as the regulator depressed that note sharply. At the same moment, my 'back baize' gave a gasp and cried "*Do* not leave me, dear!" as *she* found the end of the key above her taking an upward departure. Then the 'lever spring' and other parts of my 'action carriage' jabbered together inanely as they moved, and my 'notch' swore, yes, positively swore. I draw a veil over the unparliamentary behaviour of the 'hammer shank,' which, at this moment, gave a cowardly kick upwards, accompanied by a savage yell from the 'hammerhead' as it twanged the string.

Then began again multitudinous mutterings. "Jacob, don't press so hard!" whined my sound-board to the bridge; we always called the bridge 'Jacob' because it was distantly related to a famous ladder.

"How *can* I help it?" snarled Jacob. "This nasty string is trying to split me in two."

"It's a lie!" cried the string, rudely. "*I* am not responsible for myself."

"Who is, then?" demanded the bridge.

"The brutal wrest-pin, stud, and hitch-pin are tearing me apart!" shrieked the string.

"Hold on, boys!" laughed the studs to the jolly tuning-pins under the music desk. "Hold tight, lads! and don't listen to those wires. It's a tug of war between you and the hitch-pins."

"Aye, aye, sir!" laughed the pins. "We've hitched the steel strings round our slacks. They'll have to tear us apart before *we* leave go!"

And all this time there was a scarifying process of

rasping, scraping, pumice-stoning, 'filling in,' and polishing, to be endured on the outside of my case! Think of it! Then, to make matters even worse, before I was properly regulated, a player one day sat himself down at my keyboard. He ran his fingers over half a hundred of my notes. Gramercy! The shocks of the concussions and the wailings within me—magnified a thousandfold—were both terrifying and heartrending. Never, oh never! shall I forget that *mauvais quart d'heure*. Yet, in spite of the pandemonium going on in my inside, I was conscious that some divine music was being given forth from me. It was akin to the effect aboard a battleship when the guns are at work, and when, above all the banging, there are occasionally to be heard the strains of the 'Surprise Symphony,' being beautifully played by the string band of the Marines in the officers' mess below.

I thought I should have gone mad, with all this tumult in my inside. The public may not know it, and I do not wish to alarm anyone, but there are many mad pianos to be found in England, and the absolutely mad pianos are mostly German.

The skilful regulator, however, saved me. He was working one day at my 'action,' and the noises were going on as usual, when, with a cry of 'Shut up!' my biggest damper-head suddenly plopped down, and smothered an offending string. Other dampers followed suit. Instantly all the noises within me ceased, and cacophony was chained up.

I had 'found' myself! I had 'settled down.' My soul, my palpitating, sexless, breathing soul, had been evolved! Within me, even as a pearl is embedded in the guileless oyster, my spiritual self had taken up its residence. I was fortunate. There are some pianos

without souls. Such instruments are doomed to jangle and jar until they fall to pieces. Soulless pianos can never magnetise an audience as I can, even now, although I am past middle age as I write.

Why have the greatest pianists of the age desired to play on me, and no other piano? Because my soul has inspired them, even as it inspires me, to write down this unique autobiography which, although cast aside by the thoughtless, shall be cherished by the immortal gods when time is no more. Avaunt! ye who declare there is no soul in a good piano. The precise locality of the soul is difficult to define. Some connoisseurs aver that my soul resides in a certain layer of pure silk, hidden within my hammer-head, like the silver gut in the bosom of a bloater.

Be that as it may, the music produced from me—by even a Liszt or a Rubinstein—could not be worth listening to, were it not for my soul, which imparts to the music its nobility.

It was only when I was quite completed, and when all big and little voices within me had merged themselves into one sonorous *diapason normal* tone, that I 'found' myself.

Having had my legs screwed out—think of it!—I was taken away to be 'tested' with two other pianos, after the 'maker' had had his name emblazoned on my treble end, as if I had been a sheep in the back-blocks of Australia, or a cow on a Californian cattle-ranche. That was the last indignity I suffered at the factory.

From that moment the career of the finest concert grand of the century began, a career which will be described in the following chapters, wherein an inkling is given of the miraculous thoughts, blessed sensations, and emotional throbs which have animated the heights

and depths of my scale. The incredulous reader is enjoined to 'read on'; for whilst I unfold to the world, for the first time, a highly varnished tale of the personal experiences of a piano, the heart of creation shall pulsate with surprise, and the framework of the universe shall chortle chromatically up and down its entire compass.

II

I AM CHOSEN

BY WALTER MACFARREN
(Senior Prof., Royal Academy of Music)

I THINK it is Charles Lamb who says that the measure of choosing well consists in a man's liking that which he has chosen, and the choice in this instance satisfied those who made it. The Earl of Roscommon, in his *Essay on Translated Poetry*, remarks that "Men should choose an author as they choose a friend"; well, substitute 'Pianoforte' for 'Author' and I may, without undue assumption, hope that those who chose myself have found in me a humble but true and ever-abiding 'friend.'

The fact that so costly an instrument as I had been completed seemed of small moment to my makers. I understood the reason, when I found that I was only one of a triplet finished on the same day. We were three concert grand pianofortes of the costliest internal construction, made on the newest principles, and we represented, collectively, a selling value of one thousand guineas.

I was envious of the grand which stood next to me, because it had a more highly decorative case than my own, and when I heard that there was to be a private trial to determine which of us was the best, I must

admit that my courage temporarily forsook me, and, being an ambitious instrument, I became nervous.

We three rivals stood side by side in silence, like a battery of heavy ordnance waiting to be fired off. I was not aware, then, that musical instruments could talk to one another, but if I had known, pride and anxiety would not have allowed me to speak.

My judges presently arrived on the scene; there were four of them, partners in the firm which had made me. I did not know at the time their names, but I could see that they knew all about the three of us.

Those people who think that there is no art in choosing a pianoforte, may be interested if I relate what happened on this occasion.

An ordinary amateur, thinking that 'fine feathers make fine birds,' would have proclaimed my highly ornamented neighbour to be the best. I, however, was consoled by a reflection I had heard whilst at the factory, that "He that chooseth an apple by the skin, and a man by his face, may be deceived in the one, and overshot in the other." It was evident that all three of us were very good instruments, and that to none could be applied the cant word 'duffer'; moreover, we were all of the same size, and constructed precisely on the same principles. Musically, therefore, the reader might think we ought to have been of equal merit, but, had that been the case, our makers would not have troubled to satisfy themselves, by a hypercritical test, as to which of us was really the best. Given three good pianofortes, or any other kind of musical instrument for a matter of that, made exactly alike, there will always be some subtle difference between them; if such delicate varieties did not exist, they would not be musical instruments in the highest sense of the term.

I AM CHOSEN

The musician—by the way—who is penning this chapter for me, has, I believe, been often asked how a pianoforte should be chosen, and to such enquirers I heard him on one occasion reply, "Go to one of our great manufacturers whose work has stood not only the test of experience and criticism but the test of time, for the tones of the most powerful instruments, by such makers, will not need any great exertion to bring them out,—they will rise and float in the air from the gentlest pressure—and you will be sure to get a pianoforte which will wear well. With this guarantee of durability, and having selected a style of instrument of a size and shape which will best suit the room for which it is intended, let beauty of tone be the first desideratum in your choice, rather than a case to match your furniture, and select the most sustaining quality of tone, and more particularly in the middle register. In a word, spend as much money as you can afford in getting the best musical instrument, and as little as you need on external decoration. Lastly, choose that pianoforte the touch of which is best suited to your own finger; but do not, under any circumstances, take a heavy touch with the idea that it will wear lighter, or a defective repetition, in the belief that it will of itself become improved."

All this good advice I endorse parenthetically. But to come to my own trial. We three pianofortes were tuned to the normal diapason pitch, so that the conditions for judging were as fair as possible.

The youngest of the partners, an accomplished pianist, played on each of us. Scales, arpeggios, trills, and all kinds of bold harmonies were comprised in his dashing improvisation. He had strong lissom fingers and a masterly way of running over a keyboard to find

out any weak points there might be within the extensive compass of seven and a quarter octaves, for not a few pianofortes, good ones too, have, like fiddles, perceptible 'wolves.'

He began with the pianoforte furthest from me. First he tried it with all imaginable force and then pianissimo, to test the united quality of tone. Next he played staccato, to see how the dampers acted; and after that, he tried the sustaining power. He tried it with and without the pedals, he tried the repetition of individual notes, he tried it with the top up, and the top shut down, and, in fact, tested the instrument exhaustively.

"Good! Very good indeed!" was the unanimous verdict when he finished.

Anxious as I was to be pronounced the finest, I could not withhold my admiration, nor repress a fear that the instrument I had been listening to was superior to myself.

Then the beautifully decorated pianoforte next to me was opened. If its internal economy should prove to be in accord with its external decorations, then should this instrument prove to be the best of the three. It is no mark of wisdom to admire a scabbard and despise the blade. For aught I knew the soul of that instrument was as superior to mine as was its body. The judges evidently hoped this would prove so, for they listened most intently whilst it was being played upon. In regard to its tone, I knew, instinctively, that three considerations were uppermost in their minds, namely, quality, evenness, and resonance. Evenness the instrument had. It also possessed a charming quality, or timbre, of its own. But resonance it undoubtedly lacked.

"Tight," observed one of the judges. "Not quite free enough," said another. "Rather disappointing," murmured a third.

Our bird of paradise, it was evident, did not sing like the modest looking nightingale first heard. Was I *the* nightingale? It was doubtless wrong of me, but I am bound to admit that I rejoiced at the discomfiture of my gaudy neighbour.

Then came my turn.

As my top was opened and balanced on my prop-stick, the latter absolutely shook with nervousness and gave way so that my top fell with a crash. The judges laughed brutally, and my stick was raised again and this time secured firmly.

Then I felt the strong fingers of the player unmercifully digging at me to discover faults; it seemed as if I were being deluged with sound, as my hammers responsively flashed against my strings, instantly rebounded, and flashed again; my sounding-board held its breath in vain, for it was quickly forced to yield itself to its maximum power of endurance.

Presently, to my relief, the player took his fingers off my keys. "What a heavenly instrument! Why, this is a perfect gem!" he exclaimed.

"No question about that," answered one of the listeners.

"I call it magnificent!" said a third voice.

My makers were evidently as delighted with me as I was with myself at their verdict. After the qualms I had gone through I wondered, for a moment, whether that verdict was true. Indeed I was feeling astonished at my own powers, for it is as difficult for a pianoforte, as for a singer, to judge of itself truly.

"That's the instrument, then!" said one speaker.

"Yes, it is the pick of the three without a question," observed the senior of the partners; "send it to St. James's Hall to-morrow."

Proud as I had been previously of myself, I now felt prouder than ever, and my pride was justified, for, as a concert grand, had it not been admitted by competent judges that I was super-excellent?

III

MY DEBUT

BY LEONARD F. BEVAN

THE hall looked cold and cheerless. Not a creature could be seen save a middle-aged attendant at the far end of the room engaged in collecting the various things left behind by people who had been present at the morning concert a few hours before. My surroundings were not calculated to make me feel happy, and I was still aching all over from the rough treatment I had received at the hands of the dozen or so porters who had spent the best part of a quarter of an hour in getting me safely landed in the place where I stood.

I have heard singers discussing the sensation of walking on to the platform of St. James's Hall for the first time, and the agony they have endured. I can fully endorse all they say on the subject; the experience is an appalling one, and calculated to unnerve the boldest. Before coming to St. James's Hall I had had a chat with an experienced concert grand, which assured me it was an old stager and had been played upon by all the finest players known to the public. "They're a queer lot, are those players, and take a deal of humouring," he informed me in a quiet matter-of-fact way.

"I remember," the piano continued, "on one occasion, a pianist of great repute came to practise on me before a concert. After playing several Chopin Studies for a couple of hours, banging 'all she knew how,' she was discourteous enough to seize her parasol from a table by her side, and to plunge it, with all her might, between my strings into the midst of my action. It was a trying moment, and, had it not been for the unremitting attention and care of a regulator who was devoted to me, the chances are that I should not be here to tell the tale."

The electric lights had been turned on, and the green benches were beginning to fill. The first row was occupied by a young ladies' school, watched over by 'Fräulein' at one end of the bench, and 'Mademoiselle' at the other, probably not on speaking terms. Hence their distant relations to each other; all the girls were giggling. Doubtless every one of them was familiar with the hideous details of the Franco-Prussian war taking place.

The critical moment now arrived, and the tuner, sent on purpose to look after *me*, but who spent his time in the artists' room playing pitch and toss with a throaty young tenor, advanced and opened my top, and exposed my gleaming keys to the scrutinous gaze of the audience. The tuner's name was Jeremiah Jolly, and I shall have more to say about him later on.

The concert was a 'Pianoforte and Vocal Recital'; hence the presence of the horrid tenor, who, I afterwards learnt, had been engaged solely because he sang badly and would help to magnify the powers of the pianist who was being 'run' by an enterprising agent on the most approved and modern lines. Hence, also, the presence of Mdlle. Henriette D'Annoy, who

before the second piano solo, sang an English ballad with such an excessive vibrato and distressing lisp that the audience sighed with relief when she had finished, and feared to applaud lest she might take an encore.

The concert opened with a Bach fugue, very much 'bearbeitet' for the pianoforte, by a gentleman who certainly did not appear to regard that noble instrument as his best friend; at least that was my firm conviction judging by results, for the anguish I endured while that fugue was being played no piano can tell.

How well I remember that pianist; he was probably about 22 years of age, dark, thin, and rather tall, Herr Flügelbrecher by name. Owing doubtless to some unforeseen misfortune over which he can have had no control, his hair was—quite short! Cruel Fates, capillary luxuriance makes or mars the pianist's career in nine cases out of ten; I have noticed it again and again. Anyhow, the fact remains that Herr Flügelbrecher's hair *was* short, and the programme too long, with the result that Flügelbrecher fell between the devil and the deep sea and succeeded at my début in pleasing neither the ladies nor the critics.

Flügelbrecher, however, was by no means a bad pianist. On the contrary, I subsequently found him to be one of the best players I have ever come across, but he was not sensational enough.

To my intense surprise, the Bach fugue was applauded long and loudly, thanks to the forethought of the concert agent, who had carefully arranged that all things should work together for his good, and had 'papered' the house in a manner which revealed commercial propensities of no mean order. Let us

give honour to whom honour is due. Klug (the agent), though inartistic, was an exceedingly shrewd man; more is the pity, for, as we shall see, he proved to be too clever by half in the end.

"I cannot understand how people *can* call that playing," I heard a voice above me in the corner of the balcony murmur. "In my opinion it is sheer piano-pounding"—this I did not require to be told, I knew it too well—"I shouldn't wonder, in the least," continued the voice, "if he broke that piano before the recital's over, and serve him right, too."

"It seems hard lines on the piano that it has no means of retaliating," rejoined another balcony-ite. "Just imagine if it had feelings like a human being!"

"Hopeless fool!" I thought to myself.

"I do believe, after all, that Flügelbrecher *has* broken a note or something," exclaimed Balcony-ite No. 1, panting for a scene. "Look! the tuner is coming on to the platform."

"Only to shut down the top for the singing, as they always do," answered B'ite No. 2.

"'Sh——! here comes Solfeggi. I've heard that he sings splendidly, or I've read it in some paper or other," whispered B'ite No. 1, loud enough for me to hear on the platform.

"I can guess what paper you saw *that* in," retorted the irrepressible B'ite No. 2, "and I presume you have also heard how much he paid to be allowed to sing at the Wednesday Chamber Concert three weeks ago. If I had the management of those concerts, I wouldn't let such a singer appear at them, even though he were to offer me £20. Now, listen to that high F sharp, it is almost larky enough to be a joke. I should like to catch it, and send it to *Punch*."

At this point the conversation was interrupted by a series of sobs which came from the seats immediately behind where the balconyites were sitting. The sobber was only the unfortunate Solfeggi's fiancée, who had heard the whole of the conversation just described. She had wondered lately why Solfeggi was receiving such good engagements, and now that she was getting near the truth, she found it harder to bear than the suspense of the past few weeks.

Solfeggi's song being over, Flügelbrecher appeared once more, and once more was he greeted with thunderous applause (Klug was a *very* ingenious man), nor was it until the pianist had played the first six or seven bars of the *Appassionata* that the clapping of many hands ceased. While this sonata was being rendered, I realised, for the first time, what a beautiful instrument I was. Up till then I had had little opportunity of judging of my own capabilities, because I had never been played on by a good pianist, and had never imagined that any pianoforte could be made to produce the effects which Flügelbrecher got from me that evening.

In several parts of the sonata I felt almost stunned by my own magnificence, and it became apparent to me why a dear little pianette, labelled A 454—whom I had fallen into pianissimo love with some days before at the factory where I was made—had always spoken to me in a voice of abject humility, as though I were an infinitely superior being. I shall tell you more about that pianette towards the end of this autobiography.

The rest of the concert passed off successfully, Solfeggi and Flügelbrecher appearing in turns until the end of the programme was reached.

To an ordinary concert-goer, I have no doubt that the recital was of little moment. To me, it was a matter of wild interest. Should I be noticed in the papers next day? Should I be sent to concerts again? Would Hammertitszki play upon me? (Hammertitszki was, I had heard, a greater pianist than Flügelbrecher.)

These were questions that flashed across my mind directly the concert was over. Nor was it till I was finally locked up and the porters appeared to take me whence I came, that I ceased to cogitate on my own fortunes. One thing alone annoyed me, which was that Flügelbrecher had succeeded in hitting a few of my notes out of tune—the 'unisons' had gone. This was particularly vexatious, for the man who had tuned me for the concert was nice, besides being an admirable tuner, and I was anxious not to disappoint him.

I was overjoyed to hear the next morning that several critics had been greatly impressed by my tone, and had commented on it in the morning papers. One paper, I remember distinctly, said that "although Herr Flügelbrecher is without doubt a pianist of great technical ability, it cannot be denied that the exceptionally fine tone-quality he produced was in no small measure due to the admirable instrument upon which he elected to play."

This, then, was the result of my first appearance before an audience at St. James's Hall.

While calmly thinking over my success, I suddenly heard a voice just by me say, "Here, this is the piano you want; it won't take long to tune it; you must get it done by four. It has to go to Edinburgh for a concert to-morrow." Great Cristofori!

IV

HOW I HELPED ANGUS MACKAY TO SUCCESS

BY J. C. H. MACBETH
(Aberdeen)

WHEN I heard that I was to be sent to Edinburgh, I had no idea of the fresh agonies in store for me. My transference from the factory to St. James's Hall had been a comparatively simple affair. Beyond being slightly jolted in the van, and having a feeling of nervous apprehension until my legs were screwed into me in the hall, I had experienced nothing to complain of. But the preparations for a railway journey were different.

The packer was a man with 'no music in his soul,' and, therefore, 'fit for treason, stratagems, and spoils.' He ruthlessly bored three large holes in my leg blocks, and then, through corresponding holes in a big packing case, he inserted three great coach-bolts, which gripped me tightly, and fixed me immovably. Next, a huge lid was put on to the packing case and screwed down with innumerable screw-nails, and I was carted off to King's Cross, and placed, all by myself, in a waggon attached to the Scotch express.

I shall not inflict upon my readers a description of the discomfort of being whirled along in a vehicle destitute of springs at a speed averaging sixty miles an hour.

They will better imagine such discomfort than I can describe it.

I arrived early next morning at Edinburgh, sore and with several unisons out of tune, and was shunted into a siding where I lay undisturbed for many hours, trying to compose myself, and looking forward to the time when, released from my humiliating imprisonment, I should again become a musical potentiality. At length the doors of the waggon were thrown open, and I heard a voice exclaim, "Sic a size o' a thing, Geordie!" "Ay," replied another voice which, I presume, belonged to the individual addressed as Geordie, "she'll tak' a bit o' liftin', that ane, I'm thinkin'."

I may mention that I had become tolerably familiar with the Scottish dialect, as my regulator, who was a canny Scot, always used his vernacular when conversing with his assistant, who also hailed from the same side of the Tweed.

"Weel," said the first speaker, "I'll awa' an' fess some o' the lads to gie's a han', or wi' get her ta'en oot."

In a short time he returned with the necessary assistance, and, with many objurgatory shouts of "Canny there, boys!" and "Dinna let her doon wi' a *deist*!" I was put in a lorry and driven off to the Music Hall, where I was placed on the platform, ready once more to take an intelligent interest in my surroundings, and to give forth a portion of my musical soul to the inhabitants of the Scottish capital.

I was as yet unaware of the nature of the concert I was destined to take part in, and the tuner who put in the unisons disturbed by my journey gave me no information.

While indulging in a pleasant reverie, I heard a footstep. A good-looking young man approached me,

carrying a violin in his hand. He struck my middle A for the purpose of tuning his violin, and the sympathetic touch of his fingers sent a thrill through my frame and convinced me that, at last, here was someone who appreciated me, and that there was an affinity between us. I could feel that he was an artist to his finger tips.

After tuning his instrument he looked round wistfully, and, as nobody appeared, he laid the violin gently on my case and went away.

I immediately entered into conversation with the violin, who told me the history of its owner, and a great deal that I was interested to hear. The violinist was Angus Mackay, who had recently fallen in love with and married a very charming young lady. Neither of them was endowed liberally with the good things of this world, but, in their youthful rashness, they had not stopped to consider the prosaic, unromantic question of ways and means, with the result that they were finding it a bitter struggle to make both ends meet. The supreme moment of the young husband's life was now at hand, as the violinist whom Mr. Klug had engaged to play at Herr Flügelbrecher's recital that evening, had found himself unable to appear, and Mackay had been hastily sent for to take his place. It is a matter nowadays of such extreme difficulty for unknown musicians to get a public hearing, especially those without the means to force themselves forward, that an opportunity like this was a godsend to Mackay. He had come to rehearse with Flügelbrecher, who was to take part with him in the 'Kreutzer Sonata.'

The violin, having answered my questions, enquired of me how Flügelbrecher played, and if he was likely to

do justice to the magnificent sonata we were both to take part in.

"Well, that is rather a moot point," I answered. "Herr Flügelbrecher is being boomed on strict business principles, and, at the first recital at which he appeared, the vocalist was intended to act as a 'set off' to the powers of the talented pianist. If, as is likely, the violinist whose place Mackay takes to-night has been engaged in accordance with that elegant principle, the pianist will not be too anxious that your owner shall enjoy a success."

The emotion aroused in the poor violin by my words was so intense, that its E-string broke; and the dear old 'genuine' Cremona gave way to a paroxysm of grief, with which I sincerely sympathised. I endeavoured to comfort my new friend as well as I could, by pointing out, with considerable cogency, that it was useless indulging in an ebullition of sorrow, and I suggested that our best plan would be to watch carefully all that took place, and do our best to mutually assist Mackay. To this the violin agreed. Just then Herr Flügelbrecher, accompanied by his agent, Mr. Klug, entered, closely followed by Angus Mackay, in whom I was now keenly interested. The latter was tall and firmly knit, and his face and features suggested that though Scotch by name, other blood flowed in his veins. I afterwards learned that his mother was Italian.

When Mackay had adjusted a new string to his violin, the rehearsal began. As it proceeded, I saw, and felt, that Flügelbrecher was by no means pleased that an artist who played so beautifully as Mackay, should share the honours at *his* recital. When Mackay had gone, Herr Flügelbrecher commented ill-naturedly on his colleague's performance, and demanded the

reason of his engagement. Klug hastened to explain matters, adding, reassuringly, that Mackay would evidently make a mess of it in the evening. Mollified by this suggestion, Flügelbrecher sat down and improvised so divinely that I could not but wonder how a soul capable of evolving transcendent melody could harbour the mundane emotions of egoism and jealousy.

The hall attendants now came on the scene to make the final arrangements for the evening, and when Flügelbrecher and his friend Klug departed, I was edified and amused to hear the critical remarks of the ushers concerning the pianist.

One sagacious Scot, the fiery tinge of his hair and whiskers loudly proclaiming his nationality, taking a huge pinch of snuff, and passing his mull to a friend, said, "I'm thinkin', Jamie, he's no muckle o 'a player, yon birkie." "Fat wid gar ye jalouse that?" enquired Jamie, cautiously helping himself to a pinch. "Weel, ye see, his hair's nae length ava, and there's naething orra aboot's claes or hat, and I dinna see that there's onything oot o' the ordinar in the wye he ca's the peyana." "An 'forbye," struck in another one, "he hisna ony style worth spikin' aboot. Thon Mussy Frappecordes that wis here nae lang syne, hid sic a weel shackit heid, that the hair o' him near aboot happit up his lugs, an' he waggit his heid and body a' ower the place, then he wid raise his een tae the roof, an' next he wid lower his heid till he near cam agin the teeth o' the peyana. Eh mon! bit it wis a gran' sicht watchin' his manuvers!"

These and other remarks in the same strain served to convince me that the mannerisms of certain *virtuosi* were appreciated by at least a section of the public; and, if any of those musicians (*sic*) with exuberant

hirsute appendages — who eke out with elaborate flourishes of arms, hands, and head the skill their fingers lack—chance to peruse these lines, I trust that they will apply to their souls the moral which the relation of this conversation reveals.

The audience now began to assemble, and I was at once struck by the different characteristics of this from my London audience. Judging by the expressions of their faces, I am fain to admit that there is some truth in the saying that "Scotsmen take their pleasures seriously." With most of them the concert seemed to be part of the day's work.

Flügelbrecher appearing on the platform, made his bow to the audience, who did not respond as an English gathering would have done, by a round of applause, but received his salute without acknowledgment.

Perturbed by this chilling reception, Flügelbrecher sat down in front of me, and nervously screwed the music-stool up and down, and, when he finally summoned up courage to begin, I thought he was going to bungle the Chopin Sonata with which he was opening our programme.

I, however, was in excellent form, the Edinburgh air having braced me up considerably, so, having summoned my action, strings, and soundboard to my aid, I succeeded in producing a wealth of rich and delicious sound, which soon dispelled the pianist's nervousness, and enabled him to finish our sonata in a manner which elicited the heartiest plaudits of the audience. Before bowing his thanks, he whispered a few words of gratitude to me for my assistance, which filled me with pride, and amply rewarded me for the efforts I had made on his behalf.

After Flügelbrecher had played two other numbers, Angus Mackay came on. Before he began, I saw him look towards the stalls, and smile to some one (who was, the violin whispered, his wife). Following his glance, I beheld a sweet young face, in which there was infinite pathos. This, however, might have been due to a natural anxiety that her sweetheart-husband should do well. Perhaps her best feature was her eyes, which were large and of the softest brown colour, and they were full of encouragement as they met those of Angus.

The first movement of the sonata went fairly well, but I felt that Flügelbrecher dragged, in the *Presto*, and though I could not be certain that this was done consciously, it had the effect of making the violinist very uneasy. When they reached the glorious *Andante* I thought that surely Flügelbrecher would allow his artistic feelings to triumph; but no, his playing of the opening bars was positively slovenly; and when he came to the ten bars solo, before the second subject, he hastened the tempo considerably. To my dismay, Mackay did not come in at the end of those ten bars, but seemed to lose himself. The note he should have played was C, the dominant of the keynote. I determined to help Angus, and, as Flügelbrecher had left my vibrating strings free by holding down the sustaining pedal, I saw my opportunity. I made a supreme effort, and, taking a liberty my designer had done his best to render impossible, I made my overtones so powerful that the dominant C started vibrating loudly enough to reach Mackay's ear, and supply the cue I was anxious to give him, and thus he was able to resume correctly.

This narrow escape of a breakdown, instead of dis-

concerting him, seemed to give the violinist more confidence, and he finished the *Andante and Variations* as if the muse Euterpe herself had inspired him. Flügelbrecher now allowed his better nature to assert itself, and the brilliant way in which he played the final *Presto* atoned for his former indifference. The duet ended, the musicians were greeted with rapturous applause by the delighted audience, and hand-in-hand they had to repeatedly bow their acknowledgments.

At the conclusion of the concert, Klug congratulated both players on their success, and said their reputations were, in Edinburgh at any rate, thoroughly established.

Mackay then introduced his wife—whose face was beaming with happiness—and her sister, Miss Lindsay, to Flügelbrecher and Klug. The former, who seemed to be greatly taken with Miss Lindsay, entered into an animated conversation, while Klug, drawing Angus aside, asked him if he would care to accompany them for the rest of the tour, offering him such handsome terms, that it was with a voice husky with emotion that he accepted.

Angus hastened to impart the good news to his wife, who seemed equally overcome at this auspicious opening of better days.

When the first excitement wrought by this blissful prospect was over, she said, "Angus dear, you must take me with you; this will do beautifully for our wedding tour!"

Angus explained to Klug that when they were married, they had to dispense with the luxury of a honeymoon trip, and he hoped that Herr Flügelbrecher would not object to his wife accompanying him.

"Ach! most certainly not," cried the Herr, now in high good humour; "ze more ze merrier!"

He then turned toward Miss Lindsay, and insisted that she, too, should form one of the party. So it was arranged that they would all go to Dublin, where Flügelbrecher was to give his next recital.

As they departed for supper, I said *au revoir* to the violin, well pleased that it was not 'farewell,' and I was then left alone to enjoy the pleasing reflection that I had been instrumental (no pun intended) in assisting Angus Mackay to catch the tide of fortune, which I hoped would, taken at the flood, lead him on to world-wide fame.

Alas! in spite of my good wishes, the flower of poor Angus's fame was destined to be nipped in the bud.

V

SHE KISSED MY COLD KEYS

BY ANNIE W. PATTERSON
(Mus. Doc., B.A. Dublin)

By this time I had become accustomed to being imprisoned in a packing-case, and jolted and whirled along in van and train. But it was a novel, though not by any means an agreeable experience for me to be consigned, at the Glasgow Docks, to the dark, evil-smelling hold of a Dublin-bound steamer, and to suffer unutterable distraction from mysterious rollings and heavings which were caused, I afterwards learnt, by the 'swell' of the Irish Sea on a particularly rough night. When I confess that, at a terrific lurch, as one of my top unisons slackened, it gave vent to a squeak of pain, my readers can well imagine that I became, on the *high* sea, as nearly C-sick as it was possible for a well-constructed piano to be! An inferior instrument must have collapsed utterly.

Suffice it to say that I arrived at the quays of the Liffey in a most unenviable state of tensile qualmishness, and there, alas! fresh horrors awaited me. Imagine the shock my internal structure sustained when I was accidentally dropped from the dog-hooks of the crane on to the stone pavement of a wharf six feet below! No dissonance of Wagner's ever equalled

the appalling chord my interior emitted, as every string, freed for the nonce from the pressure of my dampers, gave forth its own particular wail of despair.

"Begorra, if that isn't one of them pyanas!" I heard a docker exclaim, laughing cheerfully at my misfortune. "Lend a hand there, Pat O'Brien and you others, will ye! Be the powers, Micky, we'll be mhurdered for lettin' the baste fall like that!"

"Arra thin, me bhoy. Don't be for callin' the poor thing names!" I heard another voice reply, as eight pairs of horny hands lifted me on to a trolley and trundled me into a neighbouring shed.

"Sure," continued Pat, "when I was employed at the ould Leinster Hall beyant—that place they've turned into a thayater now—there came a gint wid a bigger head of hair than ye'll find in all Galway, an' he played the pyana-forty, or fifty, or whatever they call it. Will ye belave me, if he didn't do everything but make the instrument spake. Be aisy now, bhoys! There ye are now! Bedad, I wouldn't mind dancin' a jig on ye!" he said, addressing me, at which I shuddered. I had been deposited flat on the ground to await my transference to the concert room. Pat, sitting down on my case, loaded a short clay pipe, and went on with his reminiscences as follows:—"Musha, to see the way that pyana man boxed the instrument! Sullivan an' Corbett wasn't in it, I can tell ye! An', be the same token, the way I remimber him so well was that, if ye'll belave me, he was a namesake of me own—at laste his first name was Paddy—but I forgit the rest, barrin' that it made me feel as dhry as an impty whisky bottle, the same as I feel at prisint, afther haulin' of this here load!"

And he smacked his lips at the thought of the bottle, not of me, the wretch!

"Git up wid ye, an' give us a hand with them other cases!" was Micky's response. "It's not at this hour of the mornin' ye ought to be sittin' there tellin' stories, Pat, an' pinin' for a dhrop of the crayture. For all the way that Paddy What's-his-name banged the pyana ye spoke of, whist, be warned man!" and he lowered his voice, "Don't say *we* dhropped this one, or, by the powers, it 'ill be the last dhrop at the docks for you and me!" The men moved off after that, and I was left alone, still feeling bruised and aching.

I will not detail the harrowing sensations of my removal to the Ancient Concert Rooms, where the evening's recital was to be held. Once safely placed on the platform, I had again to undergo the ordeal of tuning, this time at the hands of an Irish expert.

After the shock I had received on being landed, it was not to be wondered at that the tuner who attended to me should find, to his dismay, that my action was deranged. It was a wonder that my sound-board did not split; and had not my frame been well cast, it must have cracked: and then I should not have experienced the happiness I am about to relate in this chapter.

I was fortunate in being consigned to the hands of an efficient man—one who, indeed, was superior to his calling; for, as I gathered from his subsequent improvisations upon me, he was a natural, if uncultured musician, as well as an able tuner—a combination seldom to be met with amongst his fraternity. The care and trouble he expended upon me were great; and he treated me so reverently and skilfully that I felt considerable admiration for his talents. I

therefore much regretted to afterwards overhear a remark passed between two charwomen employed in cleaning the hall:

"Law, Brigid!" said one, "that young man do look careworn! He has a hard time, poor sowl, to make inds meet."

The unconscious subject of gossip, having faithfully fulfilled his duties, departed, and I awaited the opening of the doors.

What a stampede there was then, to be sure! No English public would ever scramble and rush as did those area and balcony people to get good seats; and what pleased *me* most was the fact, which I shortly noticed, that the positions most favoured were those which commanded a good view of my shining ivory keys, so soon to be hallowed in a most romantic manner—but I am forestalling.

The hall in which I was to be heard I could see, when the gas was fully turned on, was commodious and comfortable; and the seats were so placed that, from most points, a comprehensive view of the other portions of the house could be obtained—a fact not lost on the lady members of the audience, who were on the tip-toe of curiosity at each new entry, and radiant with smiles and profuse with nods, as they whispered critical remarks about dresses, when an acquaintance was recognised in the incoming stream.

Right in the front row of the reserved seats, I presently espied the beautiful young wife of Angus Mackay. With her was her still more fascinating sister, Miss Lindsay; and next to her sat a very starchy-looking lady who had the appearance of a wealthy 'globe-trotter.'

Miss Lindsay seemed to have developed a new light

in her large grey-blue eyes; and, an occasional flush of expectancy, as she watched the stage door leading to the artists' room, made me wonder whether it was concern for the success of her brother-in-law, or a growing interest in Herr Flügelbrecher, that held her in an evident state of nervous tension.

I was no longer in doubt as to the trend of her thoughts when, on the appearance of the Maestro Flügelbrecher, the fair girl hung her head to hide the deep blushes that rose, unbidden, to her cheeks. She only dared lift her eyes timidly to look at the artist, when, after the tumultuous burst of truly Hibernian applause which greeted his appearance had subsided, the executant sat down before me and preludised softly, while some late-comers were making an unnecessarily demonstrative way to their seats.

It did not take me long to remark that a change had also come over Herr Flügelbrecher. I felt it particularly in the seat of my affections, my soft pedal. Whether it was the enthusiastic burst of greeting which he, a complete stranger, had just received from a warm-hearted and impulsive race, or the glimpse of a certain golden-haired, graceful figure, clad in shimmering white, that met his gaze when he surveyed his audience, that had *transformed* the man, I could not tell. But one thing was certain, Flügelbrecher was less self-conscious and more emotional than I had hitherto known him to be. I thought I had learnt his many moods, but I now discovered that he was rapidly developing *soul*. It was no longer, with him, a mere correct and brilliant executive display: there was intensity, fire, and pathos in his playing.

This was particularly noticeable in his reading of the 'Moonlight Sonata,' which found a place in that

evening's programme. It seemed as if, in the divine *Adagio*, he pictured the disclosing and development of a beautiful dream; the awakening of the spirit to a new and enthralling sensation; the yearning for sympathy and fellowship with a kindred mind. Piano though I was, I felt that this was the dawning of the strange rapture which human beings call *Love*.

In the *Allegretto* I declare to you, most solemnly, that it was as if a flash of sunshine from the performer's inmost being flooded me. This artist electrified me in a way which was new. She, the adored one—whom he only dared to worship from afar—had, I knew, smiled upon him and bade him hope. It was as though—to speak in the language of mortals—when one is happy on a summer day, the blue of the sky grows more intense, the singing of the birds sounds sweeter, the purling of the brook clearer, and the very air becomes ambrosial.

But ah! What a crash! Dear me! How it made me jump! The player had dashed into the *Presto* at a break-neck pace! Could he sustain that speed to the end? I endeavoured to help him by every means in my power. My keys responded, with incredible rapidity, to his fevered touch. "Must the dream of love always lead to such anguish as this?" I kept asking myself. This was no longer tranquillity and radiant joy; I expressed a passionate yearning, the sobbings of a soul in pain, a conflict with opposition and disappointment; yet the struggle continued ever onward and upward, towards a heavenly ideal.

Again and again I trembled for my master's reason, as his fingers tore along. Was his *technique* equal to the rush? Could his strength hold out? The fire must consume him. Yes, he was surpassing himself!

I did not give him credit for so much nervous energy. He had worked himself up into a *furore*, a frenzy, a white heat, and the beads of perspiration stood on his brow. His breath came and went in the excitement; I feared for him.

Ha! He had come to the *decrescendo* that leads into the *Repetition.* In his madness there was still method. It was but a short respite. Then he was off again, accelerating the pace to an alarming extent. My strings quivered, my sound-board throbbed with glory, my white-felted hammers danced like lightning beneath my shimmering threads of steel; my whole being was aquiver, uplifted, convulsed!

Stay! He had reached the *Cadenza.* It revealed itself like a sequence of a myriad pearls—the triumph of Hope, Faith, and Love over the vicissitudes of a stormy, discordant world; and the short bright *Coda*—that reminiscence of dark days past and gone for ever in the hour of victory—brought Beethoven's master fantasia to a brilliant and victorious close!

For a few seconds, sheer amazement held the audience spell-bound. Then, like a volley from naval guns—the flash of which is seen before the sound is heard—began the thunders of applause—the stamping, pounding, clapping, and cheering that one hears only to perfection in the Irish capital. Herr Flügelbrecher, myself, and the presence of *Love* had carried the house by storm!

We had done more. We had broken a maiden's reserve, and compelled her to cast propriety to the winds. Could I be deceived? Surely that was not the bashful Miss Lindsay, who, in her intense enthusiasm and delight at the success achieved by the man she had learned to love, had sprung to her feet? Yes,

'twas she. Unloosening a diamond heart she wore as a brooch, she pinned it nervously to her dainty lace kerchief, and then deftly flung it at the pianist's feet! Herr Flügelbrecher gave a glance round in surprise. Quickly discovering from whom the gift came, he picked it up, pressed it to his lips, and, looking with intense devotion towards the beautiful giver, he fastened it, with a smile and a bow, to his breast. Thereat the applause burst forth anew, for there was something which appealed to a Celtic audience in this unrehearsed item of the programme.

"This is not a Spanish bull-fight, young woman," loudly remarked the starchy spinster near Miss Lindsay, in a shocked voice. The beautiful young girl, thus rebuked, recollected herself, and sunk to her seat covered with confusion.

It was afterwards Angus Mackay's turn. But I scarcely felt interested in him on this occasion, for he was staggered rather than encouraged by the ovation he received. Ere the recital closed, however, he warmed up to his work, and gave an exquisite interpretation of the third movement—*Agitato Assai*—of the Viotti 'Concerto in A Minor,' for which he was rapturously recalled. Then he quite won the hearts of the hearers by his wonderful *cantabile* rendering of that most popular of Irish melodies—the *non plus ultra* of a famous *diva*—'The Last Rose of Summer,' a local musician supplying an improvised accompaniment.

If the audience were beside themselves before, they now went frantic, and cried aloud for a repetition, which Mackay was at last compelled to accede to, although the hour was late.

"You call dat an Irlandisch melodie?" remarked Herr Flügelbrecher, banteringly, after Mackay had

bowed himself off the platform for the third time, "Ach du liebe Zeit! It is to be found in Flotow's 'Marta!'"

"True," struck in the Irish accompanist, "but you forget, mein Herr, that the melody was in existence before Flotow adopted it. You would find it, if you looked, centuries back among the Munster people under different names, such as 'The Groves of Blarney,' or 'The Young Man's Dream'; and we West Islanders, who, you know, are innately musical to our finger tips, are proud to remember that never did a melody create such a *furore* in Dresden and London, as did this one when it was introduced into the opera you mention."

"Ach, so?" said Flügelbrecher, surprised, "I did not know dat before."

All this was said in an undertone close by the stage entrance, but I heard every word; as did also many of the audience, who are often amused by the *asides* of the artists at a concert.

At length the recital, which was a supreme success, came to a close. The hall rapidly cleared; for the numerous *encores* had unduly protracted the performance, and many people were anxious to catch last trains on the Kingstown and Bray line. Mrs. Mackay hastened into the artists' room to congratulate her husband.

She was followed, at a much slower pace, as if in a dream, by her sister, Miss Lindsay, who did not rise until the lights were lowered.

The platform was deserted. As she approached the steps, leading up to it, a strange impulse seized Gertrude Lindsay. There was no one present to witness what followed but *me*.

She looked earnestly in my direction. There was a moment's hesitation, and a timid look round to see that she was not observed.

"Oh, I must," she murmured. "He played so divinely! Oh! what a darling piano!"

Then, like a frightened white rabbit, she tripped up the steps to the platform. Her slim, little figure was encircled by a dark velvet opera cloak with snowy swan's-down trimming. She stood before me in all her radiance, a beam of light from the half-open door of the artists' room illuminating her as with a halo. And then she blessed me! Yes, actually gave me her blessing! Was ever a piano so honoured?

"Oh, thou glorious instrument!" she whispered, "I love thee because *he* loves thee; because thou hast revealed to me *his* soul, *his* genius; *my* love, *his* love! May'st thou be blessed above all pianos, and remembered after they are all forgotten! Dear piano! I thank thee for showing me *his* love, and revealing to me *mine*. I am his for ever! Darling, sweetest piano, I bless thee, even as thou hast blest me!"

Then came one of the crowning moments of my existence: I shall never forget it. This girl, this beautiful creature, this queen, this angel, knelt down before me —positively went on her knees, and—*she kissed my cold keys!* I could feel the pressure of her warm, ruby lips as they infused a fresh life, fresh hope, fresh joy into me!

"After this," I said, "vandals can smash me, damage me, break me; I care not—*I have lived*!"

I was thus in a tremor of excitement; Miss Lindsay, on her knees, looked at me earnestly, hungrily, yes, lovingly.

Oh! who can depict my glorified sensations as those

sweet lips, formed like a Cupid's bow, pressed themselves again and again against my cold ivory? And I, a machine of metal, wood, and many fabrics, yet possessed of a soul, loved my lover. These were moments of intense ecstasy. If ever a piano desired to return a kiss, I was that piano. How I rebelled against my dampers as they, in duty bound, prevented my strings responding with a sympathethic vibration.

The sole vent for my suppressed and concentrated feelings was given to me by Miss Lindsay herself, when, in leaning over me, her mantle accidentally brushed against my top treble octave, and allowed me to whisper Æolian things in the fervour of my delight and emotion.

But hush! At this moment I was sensible of approaching footsteps. Miss Lindsay heard them not. She was still kneeling, absorbed in her contemplation and worship of *me.*

Herr Flügelbrecher was returning for a volume he had left behind on the piano—on my desk. He started back, naturally, in amazement, when he beheld the divinity of his heart bowed before *me*, as before a shrine! Much as he loved me, I could swear, for a second, that he forgot his Art and was jealous of *me*!

Then a board creaked beneath his feet, and Miss Lindsay started up in confusion. Their eyes met. Neither spoke for a moment. Flügelbrecher stretched forth his arms to her.

"Fräulein Gertrude! Mein liebes Herz!" he cried, as he rushed forward and embraced her.

I could just hear her whisper, "Heinrich!" She had hidden her beautiful face upon his breast.

The hall being dark, save for the solitary ray of light from the stage door, I was only conscious that the

lovers were going away together through the shadows. Herr Flügelbrecher had forgotten all about his music book. They were happy—I could feel it—I could gather it from the fragrance of the air which was wafted around them and me, till they disappeared from my range of vision.

And—oh, yes! I was happy too. Was I not adored by a great artist, Herr Flügelbrecher? Had not the sweetest girl invoked a blessing on me? Had I not been kissed by loving lips—the lips of a Venus, an angel? What greater bliss than this could the best piano in the world desire?

I was not shut up that night, but I did not mind in the least.

VI

A TRAGEDY

BY JAMES C. DIBDIN
(Edinburgh)

LIFE'S sweetest moments are often fleetest. So it was with me. With the joy of youth pulsating through my wires that night in Dublin, my sounding-board seemed filled with ecstasy, and, for much too brief a period, I continued on tour with my delightful companions. I was happy, so were they—save one. The exception was Klug. I did not like Klug. He was no artist; soulless and sordid, he haggled over pence where shillings had been earned. One evening, it was at Manchester, I learnt that our manager was even worse than mean. He was dishonest. Flügelbrecher had asked him what were the returns, and, although the pianist was entitled to know, Klug told him a lie. Flügelbrecher left the platform, where he had asked Klug the question, and then I learnt more. Klug had a habit of muttering to himself. He never imagined that a mere pianoforte could listen. True, he often spoke in German; but what of that? The language of music is universal, and so music (of which I am the embodiment or latent spirit) understands all languages. That night, however, Klug spoke in broken English; it was assumed, I felt sure. The man seemed to me

to have been an actor, who had probably travelled in Germany.

"I will him give few, very few moneys," he said; "I will him tell that I invest ze rest. Ach! he shall spend it, he shall gamble it all avay, and ze money shall then be lost, and my verfluchter rival shall no more any good be."

Klug was muttering in this strain when the pianist returned with an open telegram in his hand.

"Dear Klug," he said in German, "I bid you adieu to-morrow, for I must keep my continental engagements. I am truly sorry for you; but, you know, it was not my fault."

Then Klug donnerwettered in German frightfully. Flügelbrecher had made these engagements long before he came to Britain, and before he had any idea of the success he was going to achieve. Being a man of honour, he insisted on keeping them, although Klug had tried to persuade him to remain where he was making so much money. The cunning agent even spoke of Miss Lindsay as an additional inducement. But it was no use; and, after a stormy scene between them, Klug went away to cancel the concerts he had announced without the pianist's authority.

Flügelbrecher, as he stood by me, rested his beautiful hand tenderly on my lid. The contact with myself seemed to bring him back to his usual mood. He came round as in a dream to my keyboard, and gently raised my fall. Thinking aloud, he said, "And you too, my beloved Klavier, I must part from—the best piano artist ever played."

At that moment Miss Lindsay joined him; and, after he had played a few chords which thrilled me to the centre of my sound-board, the lovers left me to the quietness of the night.

Next morning I learnt that I had been telegraphed for by my makers for another concert agent, who, jealous of the success Klug had had with Flügelbrecher, had engaged his rival, Mons. Hammertitszki, for a long tour. The first recital was to be on the following night, and so, once more, I found myself in London, where my fame as 'the piano that Flügelbrecher played upon' was established.

Mons. Von Hammertitszki came to the concert room early to rehearse, but when I saw him my dampers shuddered. He was short, shabbily dressed, wearing a hat that seemed to have been rubbed with grease, and was smoking a short, stinking pipe. So much for first impressions; but the moment he touched my keys I knew my mistake and the bigness of his musical soul. We had a great success that evening, and afterwards came a long and splendid tour; the only thing during which I could not reconcile myself to, being that horrid evil-smelling pipe.

Then I travelled *en prince* (always in passenger train, for I was now too precious to be risked in a luggage van) with Sir John and Lady Meyer; and the dear old gentleman loved me as well, I believe, as his charming wife did her exquisite violin, her many pets, and a beautifully silver-mounted little pistol she invariably carried.

Sir John took a few weeks' holiday, putting up at the Royal Hotel, Edinburgh, and he was so fond of me that he received permission to keep me with him there. We spent a happy time. But judge of my surprise, when, one day, my dear old friends Mrs. and Mr. Mackay called, and sat for many hours with Sir John and his lady. They—the Meyers—had newly come back from a long and successful Oriental tour and had

met aboard ship Flügelbrecher and Klug. The former, on returning, had gone straight to his German home to see his mother, who was in failing health; but in a day or two he intended to rejoin his friends. What news I had to hear that day!

The Mackays had now two children, twins, dark and fair, boy and girl, named Romeo and Juliet, and it was arranged by the happy parents to give a party on the anniversary of the birth of their loved little ones. Sir John Meyer, hearing of this, insisted on the birthday feast being held in his rooms; and the day had now come.

There was a man named Benjamin Blair whom I may term my valet. His sole work was to look after me; to see that I was in tune and perfect regulation, as well as clean and bright. Ben did his work admirably, but I disliked him for all that from the very centre of my scale.

On the day in question he found, lying on my top, a letter addressed to "His High Well-bornness Mr. Klug, Esquire." It had nothing to do with Blair; but he turned the letter over and over, chuckling at the superscription, and as if anxious to ascertain its contents. Then, muttering, "Yes, I must find out what's in it," he rang the bell and ordered up a jug of boiling water. His desire was now satisfied, for the steam soon melted the gum of the envelope. "Yes! so I thought," he exclaimed, as he read the letter. "The scoundrel; but ha! ha! he will have to pay heavy toll, and that to me. Yes to me—Benjamin Blair—or I will burst him!"

This soliloquy, however, was interrupted by the entrance of Klug himself. Blair hastily concealed the letter, and met the concert manager with a bland smile and an outstretched hand.

"Ach so! Herr Blair, you are here?" said the latter. "Sir John, is he gone, ja? I vant to speak witz him. Oh! it is very moch annoying, but I eggspect a brief. Ze concierge, he says ze letter is here. Haf you seen him?"

A search proved fruitless, until Blair stealthily produced the letter; giving a cry of simulated surprise, he pretended to find it lying inside me.

Klug took the note, and in a moment saw it had been tampered with, for he turned to Blair, and, with a face ablaze with passion, hissed out the words: "You von schoundrel! you read it? Mine letter? I will have you in prison in five minutes locked up." And at the top of his voice he shouted "Police! Police!"

"Hold your tongue," coolly responded Blair. "Yes, it was I who opened it, but, before sending for the police I advise you to read your precious letter, and judge for yourself if the information which I now possess may not land you in jail, instead of me!" An angry scene ensued; and whomsoever the letter had been from, it contained, among other pieces of evidence of a condemnatory nature against Klug, that he had invested nearly all my dear friend Flügelbrecher's money, a very large amount, in different parts of the continent, and in various names, so as to avoid suspicion or detection. It set forth further that he, Klug, was even then, on the eve of decamping to Spain to gorge himself with the fruits of his dishonesty.

Whilst the altercation was at its height, the door opened and Miss Lindsay entered. She had come expecting to see the Mackays and found, instead, the man whom, I afterwards learnt, she loathed. His manner to her was objectionable and his speech nothing but fulsome flattery. She resented this by turning to

leave the room; and would have done so had not Klug cunningly remarked that he was then expecting the Mackays. In fact, he asked Blair to go and fetch them. It was then, and not till then, that I could see that Klug had often met Miss Lindsay and had pestered her with proposals of marriage. He did his best to force her to consent to his wishes. He told her of his wealth, that they could travel together over the world and settle eventually in Paris, or where they thought best, and wherever that was, through her beauty and his ability she would be able to move and shine in the highest circles of society. She hesitated. Then Klug advanced this argument: "Think of the fortune I can put in the way of the Mackays!" This was much more calculated to influence her than anything else, but the noble-hearted girl rejected all his offers with scorn. It was then that Klug appeared in his true colours. Threatening her, and hers, with all sorts of punishments, he seized her roughly in his arms, and, disregarding the overthrow of a side table, the china ornaments on which fell with a loud crash that made my unisons jar painfully, the brute forced kiss after kiss upon his now helpless victim, who, too frightened to scream, fainted away. Just then the door opened, and Angus Mackay entered.

For a moment Klug was staggered, but his habitual presence of mind reasserted itself quickly.

"Ah! tank Got you have kom," he said, in his broken English; "she is vat you call faint, send for von doctor, quick. Ze Fräulein is ill, ja! she is ill." Speaking thus, Klug laid Miss Lindsay gently on the sofa, and commenced undoing the fichu of lace round her neck, so that she might breathe easier. Mackay, however, had approached him, and hissing the words,

"You cad," hurled the German to the ground. Mackay had evidently heard something of what had passed, for as Klug lay on the floor, the Scot denounced him in a manner which gave me much satisfaction and must have made the coward wince. But although a bully, Klug was clever, and his tongue was glib, so Mackay, being of an unsuspecting and honest nature, was easily persuaded by the rascal to believe a plausible explanation. Rising to his feet, Klug now lost no time in urging his claim for Miss Lindsay's hand. To Angus' objection that his sister-in-law was already all but engäged to Flügelbrecher, Klug, in the most solemn manner, assured Mackay that the pianist had himself declared that, although fond of Miss Lindsay, he was engaged to marry his rich cousin Fräulein Wienekind, and that his purpose in leaving them *en route* had not been to visit his mother, but this German sweetheart. Klug said this with such an air of sincerity that Mackay was astounded at first, and neither he nor Klug observed that Miss Lindsay had recovered from her faint, and had indeed left the room. Oblivious to their surroundings, Klug and Mackay discussed the matter, until Klug, who had become excited and abusive, chanced to turn round. Standing within the doorway, he beheld Miss Lindsay, arm in arm with —Flügelbrecher!

For a moment or two a death-like stillness prevailed. I quivered through every joint and pin till the deep sonorous voice of Flügelbrecher came forth as a certain note of peace. He had heard much, but his happiness was too great to allow of any feelings of anger.

"Mein friends," he said, holding up his right hand, "Dere is zome great mistake, zomveres! Friend Klug, your informations is wrong. Your ear it has

been poisoned by von who must mine enemy be. Miss Lindsay ist mine brite, vat is to be, and I haf placed ze ring of engagement—zo." And he reverently lifted her lily-white hand, on which a diamond hoop twinkled, and kissed it as gallantly as any knight of the middle ages could have saluted the hand of his 'faire ladye.'

Again for a moment Klug seemed nonplussed, but he speedily dissembled, and, with a Mephisto smile on his face, came forward. Taking the pianist's proffered hand, he shook it warmly, while he poured out—partly in English and partly in German—his hearty congratulations. A minute later, when Flügelbrecher was talking to Mackay, Klug took the opportunity to whisper to Miss Lindsay—"Remember, von word spoken of what has passed shall ruin your brother and Flügelbrecher, too."

As for the pianist, he was too full of happiness to notice the strained relations between the others. After talking with enthusiasm on various topics, his eyes suddenly rested on my keyboard. With a cry of joy he came to me! I felt wild with delight. I longed to feel his nervous, velvety, thrilling, intoxicating touch once again on my ivories. He had scarcely begun to play, when, from outside, a queer weird wail caused him to stop; the sound seemed to freeze both his and my innermost soul.

"What is dat?" he demanded, turning to Mackay. "It makes my flesh to creep—ach! it is terrible."

It was the war pipes of the Gordon Highlanders playing a dead soldier to his grave with a lament of the slain—the most ghastly sound on earth, and the sound seemed to be magnified by the wind, and, as my frame trembled, Miss Lindsay—seeing on Flügel-

brecher's face a look of horror—suffered a relapse, and again fell fainting to the floor. At the same instant an oil painting, representing a sacred subject, which hung in the room, fell with a crash. This brought in Mrs. Mackay and the twins, whose cries added to the general confusion.

It took some time before anything like tranquillity was restored, and the table was laid for the birthday dinner. Sir John presided, but it was Klug who took the initiative. He ordered up champagne and brandy. He insisted on drinking to the bride and bridegroom, to the twins, to the Meyers, to everybody he could think of, including Blair, who was also present and far from sober. Klug, in his endeavours to entertain, pretended to be intoxicated, and, gripping Blair firmly by the wrist, as the latter was pouring out a tumbler of champagne and brandy mixed, hissed into his ear in a hoarse whisper, "Be careful, you Schafskopf, I vant you to keep zober."

Blair sneered in reply, and was raising the tumbler to his lips, when Klug, with an angry exclamation, dashed it from his hands. In doing so the contents splashed across my three upper treble octaves. To an ordinary mortal, a mere man or woman, it would be difficult to describe my feelings under this horrible outrage. Every fibre of my sounding board, every string in my body, and my very frame itself, trembled with terror as the unwelcome liquid filtered slowly through my action, and spread itself to the destruction of my delicate centres and levers. Sir John, in disgust, rose and left the room. So furious was Blair that, had he been able to lay hands on Klug, he would surely have endeavoured to strangle him. With half my hammerfelts spoilt, and my baizes saturated and

clogged, I was like a man blind in one eye, and could scarcely follow what ensued. Furniture was overturned and broken, and glasses were smashed. The ladies screamed. Flügelbrecher, I know, rushed forward with evident hostile intention towards Klug, but Klug quickly dodged round me, and, catching up an empty champagne bottle, hurled it, with impetuous fury, at Flügelbrecher. It missed him. Instead, it struck Mackay on the temple. With a cry of agony, Angus took three paces towards me, and then fell headlong across my keyboard. His crimson blood dyed the virgin purity of my white ivories a deep red; and, with a sob of anguish, his life went from him.

Angus was dead. A fearful scene followed. A loud report was heard. Lady Meyer had fired her pistol at Klug, but the bullet had penetrated *my* side. Manager and waiters rushed into the room, and confusion reigned supreme. At last, Klug, cool, collected, and far-seeing, rose to the occasion. "Meine Herren," he said, "this is terrible, but"—he pointed to Angus —"he is not yet dead. I myself shall go for ze doctor," and then he whispered to Blair, who had been sobered by the fearful result of the quarrel, "Brussels on Friday: we meet there; take this," and he thrust a paper into Blair's hand which I believe was a bank-note of considerable value.

Klug had just left when Sir John entered with the police. "No one leaves this room until I permit them," commanded the inspector. Dead silence followed, while the chief felt the wrist of Mackay. "This man," he said, "is dead. He has been murdered."

"It is true!" cried Blair, "and there"—he pointed to Flügelbrecher—"is the murderer." Thunder-struck by this fresh villainy, the pianist was dumb as the hand of

the law was placed upon his shoulder, and the following awe-inspiring words were uttered :—" *Remember that anything you say now will be used in evidence against you at your trial.*"

Despite protestations on his part, and the tears and entreaties of the three ladies, Flügelbrecher was taken into custody.

And now the body of Mackay was laid upon me. I became a bier for the dead, and his blood, which had saturated my keys, trickled through my baizes, making the very fibres of my case to tremble and my soul to sicken with wretchedness.

The room was cleared of everybody. Alone, in the dark, I was left with the corpse of the clever violinist lying heavy upon me. I groaned even from my iron frame. In the stilly night every sound seemed magnified. Yet still the body above me was silent.

Then, as the night hours passed on, and I lay in this terrible affliction, a new horror arose. Ghostly figures flitted through the room. Fantastic shapes lit up the scene. The room became oppressively hot and luridly red. The great drapery house of Jenner & Co., next door, had taken fire. It was burning to the ground. Every moment I expected that I as well as my ghastly burden would be consumed in the conflagration. Past the windows of my room of imprisonment the flames roared, cracking the glass and even setting on fire the outer woodwork. How can I describe that fiendish night? Dawn broke at last. Water dripped from the roof upon the dead Mackay and me. And there I remained, a wreck, a maimed machine, helpless. The music had gone from my soul. Only anguish and horror had taken its place.

VII

POOR, POOR PIANO

BY CLARENCE LUCAS
(of Montreal, Canada)

SLOWLY the morning came. Through the shattered windows the drizzling rain was driven by the fitful gusts and fell upon me and my ghastly burden. I seemed immersed in a bath of cold perspiration, and my sensitive veneer writhed and shrank from the loathsome sprays of water that crawled in serpent trail over it. The hoarse shout of a fireman in the street below was all that broke the deathly silence of the room, all save the slow brain-racking drip, drip, drip of the mingled rain and blood which collected in sickening pools on the floor or trickled into the innermost recesses of my frame. Now and then a gallon or two of liquid from the nozzle of a hose would dash across me, whenever the weary, water-logged fireman made an effort to raise the tube and drench everything within reach. No pen quivering in the hand of the greatest genius of our age or of antiquity, could paint the horrors of that night! That I, *I*, whose soul had swayed the emotions of thousands; who had brought consolation to the afflicted, peace to the over-wrought, commotion of spirit to the thoughtless, and had revealed the unspeakable mystery of love to the sympathetic; I, whose

sounds had sighed and stormed and sobbed and sung in unison with the master artists who wooed me; whose pallid keys had all but leapt to life at the touch of the soft, warm lips of her to whom this tragedy of mine was akin; that *I* should be 'played' on by a brutal, grovelling fireman's hose! Ugh! What insult to what injury! The sum of all the collected insults offered to each of my separate parts when my iron acquired strength in the rocks of Sweden, and my sound-board listened to the singing of the wind on the slopes of the Caucasus, or when my rosewood blushed in the burning glances of the tropical sun.

This soliloquy, which, if finished, might have been worthy of Hamlet, was abruptly ended by the entrance of the Procurator-fiscal and jury, precisely on the stroke of ten. I had "supped too full with horrors" to feel any additional alarm at this rude intrusion. In fact, I was glad that the worst had passed, and I knew that the ensuing inquest and examination meant my release. At any other time the presence of a murder-case jury would have sent a depressing chill into the fibres of my soul. Now, however, I began to revive, as a frozen finger thaws at the touch of snow. The Procurator-fiscal had come none too soon, for I was on the verge of nervous prostration. There was not a perfect unison left in the entire range of my scale. My wrestpins and wires were brown with rust. Wine and brandy had gone to the heads of my hammers, and my glue was disgracefully sodden. My bridge, intended to connect myriad sound-waves with my sound-board, was powerless against the encroachments of water, my keys stuck down, and even my pedals hung limp.

Some of the jury suggested holding the inquest at the mortuary. Others thought the scene of the tragedy

the best place for the investigations. I added weight to this argument because I was too heavy to move, and so the gruesome proceedings began forthwith. Several spectacled gentlemen, who carried copies of *Sherlock Holmes*, examined the walls, the windows, and the floor. At last they looked at poor Angus's body and at poor me. They unanimously agreed: (*a*) that a quarrel had occurred in Room No 7069 of the Royal Hotel; (*b*) that Angus was dead; (*c*) that I was—or had been —a piano. There was no sympathy expressed for the murdered artist, and, of course, none for my pitiable condition. One of the jury, an honest dealer in hides, moralised on the wild life of almost all musicians. Another with the soul of an oyster and the sympathy of a clam, observed that I was better employed as a mortuary table than as an emissary of the devil, undermining the morals of the present generation—a generation far too much addicted to music. I was so wroth by this time that I hardly heard his quotation from Sallust concerning Sempronia, the tool of Cataline, "Psallere, saltare, elegantius, quam necesse est probae." This juryman, Mr. M'Taggert, was a born music-hater, who had forgotten all his schoolboy Latin but that one line, which he gloried in quoting whenever he found an opportunity. If the dock hands at Dublin drop me again, may Mr. M'Taggert be underneath!

Let me confess it, M'Taggert's remarks put me in a most unseemly rage. My strings were at a tremendous tension, and every spring in my action had lost its temper. I found to my chagrin that anger is pernicious to the moral tone of a piano, and I now bemoan my uncharitableness. I beg of my readers not to dwell too long on this incriminating page of my autobiography. Elsewhere I have spoken of my excellent qualities, and

now, as an upright piano of horizontal shape, it is my bounden duty to set down my faults. In extenuation thereof I must plead the exceptionally irritating nature of my immediately preceding experiences. Maybe the blood on my keys had helped to awaken a long-slumbering thirst for gore acquired when these ivories roamed the jungle as tusks in the jaws of a savage elephant. Moreover, my maker is responsible for my temperament. He made me cross-strung. The "pitch that doth defile," of which Falstaff spoke, had permeated my entire frame. My action had been seriously affected by the deluge of water. Every octave had a pint, every jack a gill. Dampness ever has and will put a damper on the spirits of my dampers. Was it not enough to make me lose my self-respect that I was first diluted with water and afterwards ignominiously treated as a bier?

Much as I regret my insane wrath, I still more lament my inattention to the proceedings of the jury. Procurator-fiscal, foreman, jury, witnesses, experts, detectives, and others, at the thought of whom I still shudder, are all intermingled in my confused memory. Suffice it that I remember enough to elucidate my tale. In fact, I shall repress as much of the tedious detail as possible, lest my narrative savour more of the prosiness of a commercially-minded manufacturer than of the distinguished nature of a musical instrument. I know that I was examined, first, as a witness of the murder, and secondly, by the agent of an insurance company as to the extent of my injuries. I know that the features of Flügelbrecher were haggard when two constables led him hand-cuffed into the room. I know that a thrill of sympathetic vibration swept through me when the heart-broken pianist, bending affectionately

over me, exclaimed:—"Poor, poor piano!" yes those were his words—"Mein schönes klavier, that is to this state come! Ach Gott, ze vorld how vicked she is!" I know, also, that the memory of the ashen, agonised face of the young widow will never fade from me. She bore her crushing sorrow with fortitude, and gave her testimony in a subdued but clear voice. At first she seemed too dazed to be affected by the presence of the coffin in which her murdered husband lay. During the examination of the witnesses, however, her eyes by chance were lured to my keys by the dried blood-stains on them. Then she tried to steady herself, and clutched nervously at a chair-back. But her strength was unequal to her burden, and presently she fell to the floor in a swoon. Although disconcerted by her sister's collapse, Miss Lindsay gave valuable testimony against Klug. Meanwhile, the police, having ransacked every hole and corner in Edinburgh for the missing agent and his accomplice, had received information that Klug's baggage had arrived at Aberdeen, and Blair's at Greenock, without the owners of these decoy trunks. Messages, flashed to all points of embarkation, had put alert detectives on the gangway of every steamer. For a time it seemed as if the scoundrels had given the law the slip. Yet, scarcely had the Procurator-fiscal ruled that, in the absence of an accuser, Flügelbrecher's charge was null and void, than a telegram, from the Chief Inspector at Southampton, made me—limp as I was—tingle with excitement. It was read aloud in court. The message ran as follows:—

"To Chief of Criminal Investigation, Edinburgh.

"Butter contractor, Smith, to-day sailed for Cape Town, clean-shaven and otherwise disguised answering description of Klug. Will arrest at Madeira

and detain fifteen thousand pounds. Saunders, Southampton."

Mrs. Mackay had by this time recovered consciousness, and she now heard the Inspector state that, if this suspected Smith were not Klug, the widow and her two children, as well as Miss Lindsay and Flügelbrecher, would be penniless, for the absconding agent had taken every farthing. To this intimation she paid little heed. With clasped hands and bloodshot eyes she sat by the mortal remains of him who was her idol—the artist she revered, the man she loved. The superficial reader may hitherto have been only too ready to sneer at my triumphs and smile at the misfortunes of a piano. But surely you, amongst my readers, who have seen the shadow hand of death press upon a loved one, and have watched, in mortal agony, while the icy fingers have stolen away the warmth from the lip, and the light from the eye, surely you will not make light of the widow's misery and desolation, of which I now so feebly write.

The jury in due course returned a verdict that Klug, aided by Blair, had murdered Mackay. The Procurator-fiscal accordingly said he should apply to the Lord Advocate for the issue of a warrant for the arrest of the two men. At the sight of Mrs. Mackay's prostration and grief, the court was visibly affected. Several gentlemen present desired to subscribe to a fund for her and her children's support. Miss Lindsay, however, laying her delicate hand on the widow's shoulder, said:

"I speak for my dear sister as well as myself when I thank you, gentlemen, from my heart, for your expression of such deep sympathy toward us in our bereavement." Then her eyes filled with tears. "But, gentlemen, we must firmly decline," she said, "to

be dependent on the charity of anyone, however generous the soul of the donor may be. My sister and myself have both been trained in music. I feel sure that before long our condition——"

Flügelbrecher here—unable to withstrain himself—sprang forward and clasped the noble girl to his bosom, and the assembled witnesses could not keep back their applause. The efforts of the usher to restore order were vain, until he gravely pointed to the prostrate form of the widow beside the coffin. A profound silence immediately followed. Then Flügelbrecher, turning to the court, gave vent to his feeling in his mother tongue. "God be thanked," he said—we translate his words—"I can smile at the thought that the loss of money is any hardship to me. To a man of my health, my strength, and, to judge by public opinion, my ability, the amassing of twice the amount lost seems an easy task. If my strength and talents were less, and my loss greater, I should still thank God, because these sad circumstances have revealed to me the nobility of soul, and the angelic character, of this sweet woman who has honoured and ennobled me by deigning to wear my ring upon her finger. With her by my side, what may not yet be accomplished? Perhaps my poor, poor piano, here, may yet help me to triumphs excelling all those of the past. I cannot tell you how keenly I shall miss the beautiful voice of the Cremona, as it was made to sound, by him who sleeps the long sleep which knows no waking. But I shall cherish the memory of my friend's playing, for his presence, and his influence, have made me a better man."

Flügelbrecher then raised his right hand solemnly. "Till these fingers," he cried, "are impotent, till

these eyes can no more read music, and till this right arm forgets its cunning, I, Flügelbrecher, before these witnesses, swear that the widow and fatherless children of my friend shall never want the necessities and comforts of life."

Then, overcome by conflicting feelings, the good fellow broke down and sobbed like a child.

The court was cleared. I was subsequently carried out, to be packed and forwarded for repairs to the London factory which had given me birth.

As the door closed behind me, I saw, within the room, the rays of an afternoon sun twining a halo above a wealth of golden hair which hid the face of a beautiful woman, a face pressed close to the cold lid of a coffin.

Over the misery of the widow the sun shone; and over the unspeakable joy of the widow's sister, the dark cloud of another's anguish sent a strange chill.

Why should joy be ever mingled with pain? Why should life's emotions be forever contrasting?

VIII

IN HOSPITAL

BY WILLIAM E. HORN, C.E.

No piano was more sorrowful than I was when I entered the great gates of the factory in which I had been born. Murder, fire, and water had completely wrecked me. What would those skilful mechanics who had so cleverly planned me, so lovingly constructed my parts, and carefully put them together, say to the damaged and spoilt 'mangle' which was now returned to them, mutilated, disfigured, and battered beyond recognition? Was I worth repair? Was, perchance, the engine furnace my destiny? A burnt child dreads the fire; and I shuddered, as any Smithfield martyr might have done when approaching the stake.

I prefer not to recount the exclamations of disgust with which I was first greeted by certain giant porters, as they placed me in a lift and conveyed me to the room in which I was to be examined.

Many theories were put forth in ignorance, to account for my sad condition. Some men who saw me made jeering remarks, such as, "The only thing to be done with that fearful wreck is to bury it." Others, older men, who took a pride in good work,

pitied me, and, raising their hands, said, "It is a shame to see a good instrument in such a shocking state. People who ill-treat good pianos should be gaoled."

My case was evidently a bad one, and I waited with trepidation the arrival of my examiners, the medical staff, so to speak, of the hospital.

There were four experts who consulted together about me. The foreman of the 'bellymen and markers-off' looked inside my top very carefully, whilst the foreman of the 'grand-finishers and regulators' tried my touch, and took out my action. At the same time, the foreman of the 'metal shop' investigated the condition of my frame, studs, tuning-pins, etc., and the foreman of the 'case makers' passed a horny hand carefully round the rough surface of my veneer. These men were all of them specialists, and agreed that they had never before seen so good an instrument damaged in such a dreadful manner.

"This is a serious job," said the senior of them. "We cannot do anything with this, until we have first seen Mr. Frank." Mr. Frank was the partner responsible for matters requiring special skill in construction at the factory.

I was, therefore, covered up, and left until the following day, when the partner in question had time to see me.

At about nine o'clock next morning he bustled in, with a tall hat on the back of his head. He seemed as if he worried over business, and attempted to do half a dozen things at the same time. Although comparatively a young man, I subsequently learned that he had worked through every department in that great establishment, and had served an apprenticeship in no less than four of the largest continental piano factories.

It was his boast that he never ordered a man to do anything he was unable to do himself.

On this occasion he took in the situation, and diagnosed my case in a moment. His keen grey eyes seemed to look right through me, as he put his hands in his pockets and told the four heads of departments what was to be done.

He concluded his instructions by saying, "This is a bad business, but we must remember that this is the celebrated 'A 439' which has won a good deal of fame for the house. No doubt some of our rivals imagine that the piano has been damaged beyond repair. What we have got to do is to push the work through at once; and that instrument must not leave this place until it is as good as when it was first turned out."

Perhaps I should have felt elated on hearing that I was to be so thoroughly restored. My knowledge, however, that such restoration would be a time of almost as much suffering as when I was first made, caused me to quake with fear.

But I must not dwell on my sufferings. As briefly as possible, I will describe the treatment I received whilst in hospital, and the various surgical operations which were necessary to restore me to health.

First, I was taken charge of by the foreman of the markers off, and he had my wrest-plank taken out, having first had a new plank made for me and finished off in the metal shop, where it had been bored and provided with new studs. Before my plank was extracted, all my strings had been taken off. My sounding board was also scraped, and revarnished. Then I was restrung and passed to the finisher's shop.

This was a less noisy place, and the finisher who attended to me was a very intelligent man. He had

heard of my fame and determined to do his best for me. Meanwhile, my mechanism had been sent off to the action shop to be rebushed and renotched, whilst my hammers had been entrusted to the hammer coverer—a man who could sing a good song and who had once been a professional harlequin. Meanwhile, also, the keymakers had been busy on my keys, and had fitted new ivories and sharps to two of my octaves.

My friend the finisher, whose name was 'Ted,' objected to fit in the mechanism and keys until my outer casing had been put right. So I was sent off to the case-maker's shop to have some new veneer put on my surface, for, what with being drenched with water, charred by fire and shot, I required unusual attention. The case-maker was a tall, strong, elderly man with a deep voice, who was known to his shop-mates as 'Jimmy.' Jimmy was a character. In his young days he may have been a terror, but wisdom had come with years, and he was now a leader amongst his fellows, the spokesman of the factory, and a staunch tectotaller. Jimmy, too, dearly loved a joke.

In hospitals, the suffering inmates are occasionally fêted. In like manner we pianos, whilst being restored to health, were now about to be entertained.

It so happened that Jimmy was uncle to the young tuner who had looked after me during my début at St. James's Hall, and who had played pitch and toss on the sly in the artists' room.

When Jeremiah Jolly, the tuner, was not sent out on concert work, he would be given some instruments to tune in the factory, and he was now working in the same shop as his uncle. Jeremiah had endeavoured to keep his approaching wedding a secret; but the fact

had leaked out. On the day of my arrival he had gone off for his summer holiday. That, of course, was his honeymoon. He was expected back in a fortnight. Before that time there were many consultations held in the shop as to how he was to be welcomed on his return.

Jerry, it appeared, was a very popular young man. The reason was, that he had once fought and beaten Mr. Blair, who was a bully, and generally disliked.

Jerry's friends thought out a little surprise for him, and the preparations which were made seemed to interest the old hands as much as they did the young ones.

The days passed quickly, and then one morning, by permission of the foremen, active preparations began. A clearance was made by turning us grand pianos on end. That day, meal times were devoted to decorating the shop. Next morning early, before the work-bell rang, the finishing touches were put.

There was not a workman in the place, a vanman, or a porter, who was not chuckling at the surprise which awaited the benedick.

It was fortunate for me that I chanced to be where I was, because I could see the decorations splendidly. At the end of each work-bench a small flag-staff had been erected, and festoons from staff to staff were carried right round the shop. Below the festoons of artificial flowers were broad ribbons bearing Latin mottoes. These mottoes were supplied by a workman who, before he became a pianoforte maker, had been intended for the law. English translations of the Latin were placed on the ceiling above each motto, so that the men, belonging to the shop, as they showed their friends round, displayed a remarkable knowledge

of Latin, for few of the visitors thought to look up at the ceiling.

At the further end of the shop a daïs had been erected and covered with a Turkey carpet. On this was placed an arm-chair gaily decorated with ribbons, and partly covered with a tiger skin, borrowed from a furniture shop round the corner. Above the chair was a canopy, hung with liberty silk and flanked by Union Jacks.

Jeremiah Jolly, the tuner, sauntered into the factory punctually at nine, congratulating himself that he had so cleverly contrived to keep his wedding a secret, for he was one of those young men who enjoyed playing jokes on others but disliked having any fun made of himself.

The porter at the gate grinned at Jerry; the stoker he passed smiled a triple expansion smile all over his face.

"I suppose my tie is wrong, or something," murmured the young man, suspecting nothing. Everybody he met grinned, until he felt quite annoyed. On ascending the stairs, however, he was dumbfounded. On the broad landing a crowd had collected.

"What's up?" enquired Jerry.

"You are!" shouted a wag, and everybody laughed. The door was open, and I heard plainly what was said, as Jimmy, the tall, bony case-maker, came forward and, in his stentorian voice, remarked, "Mr. Jolly, as constable of your shop, and on behalf of my bench-mates, and the delegates here present from the other shops, I congratulate you on your wedding." There was a storm of applause, which served to cover the confusion and surprise of the young man.

The redoubtable Jimmy then led the procession

through the shop. Mr. Jolly protested. It was too bad to play practical jokes. What had his private affairs to do with the factory? But it was no good objecting. He was led off through the decorated shop too astonished to say what he thought, and found himself thrust into the depths of the great arm-chair on the daïs.

Then the fun began. Jimmy threw down a steel scraper so that it rang out clearly on his bench. This was a signal for the other workmen to follow suit; and, from bench to bench, from shop to shop, from floor to floor, and from building to building, an endless peal rang out like the sound of myriad bells—the pianoforte maker's wedding chime.

When the scrapers had done ringing, Jimmy, the spokesman, approached the daïs, and delivered an oration befitting the occasion. His speech dwelt on the happiness of the married state, of the duties of a husband and a parent, and general remarks on the past career of Jeremiah Jolly. The latter, at first, resented what was taking place, and, if he could have escaped, would have done so. Then, however, it dawned upon him that personal regard was the real reason of this unusual demonstration. This feeling grew upon him as he listened to the speech of his uncle. And then his confidence returned, and he felt proud and delightfully important. He replied to the exhortation as well as he could, but was unable to finish, being overcome with emotion. Then each man in his shop shook hands with him, and when they had finished he found he was shaking hands with nearly everybody from the other shops, and the hard grips of some of his friends made him wince.

It was a great day, but it is certain that Jerry did

ot enjo y the joke half as much as did his shop-mates, who, at lunch time, drank his health.

That was how I knew of Jeremiah Jolly being married. It was the best thing he could have done, for marriage made a steady fellow of him, and, as I shall relate by and by, he subsequently became the proprietor of a country music shop, and was highly respected.

My veneering having been put right by Jimmy, I was cleaned up and refronted in another department. Then I was sent to the polisher's shop, where I was taken in hand by a worthy fellow named Thomas Atkins, of the Royal Horse Artillery, a famous driver, who had won gold spurs for being the best driver in his battery. He was now a reservist, and had been taught polishing by my makers. Poor fellow, just as he was becoming an adept, he was called out to fight for his country in the Transvaal. He never returned.

But, when I was under his care, he proved himself to be a strong and capable man. His muscles stood out like whipcord as he rubbed a surface on to me which shone like a looking-glass. Hard work did not seem to weary him, and I shall never forget the scouring with pumice-stone and various other things he gave me, before he relaxed his efforts.

After that a Scotchman, with a long red beard, 'fly-finished' me—that is to say, he adjusted my hinges, which had been cleaned up, burnished, and relacquered in the metal shop—refitted my music desk, my pedals, and the fall over my keys.

By this time, too, my mechanism had been carefully adjusted within me; and then I was tuned by a blind man, who, I learnt, had been taught his craft at an institution known as the Royal Normal College

at Norwood. He interested me, because he had that rare sense, known as 'absolute pitch,' so that he could dispense with the aid of a tuning-fork when laying my bearings.

Lastly, I was placed in a van, and sent off to my makers' show rooms, where I was toned again, and pronounced as good as when I was first turned out. My makers' name had, I was glad to note, not been replaced on my side.

IX

A CONSUMED OPERA

BY A. VISETTI
(Prof., Royal College of Music)

A GREY-HEADED man, wrapt in a huge fur coat, smoking a big cigar, opened the fall over my keys as soon as I was landed at my destination. He had bright, keen-looking eyes, which seemed to say that you could never tell what mood you might next find him in.

"La Speranza dell' Arte! La Speranza dell' Arte!" he murmured. That was his favourite phrase, for he believed himself to be the hope of the arts.

An attractive-looking woman, who I afterwards learnt was his wife, was knitting by the fireplace. Opposite to her sat the maestro's lovely step-daughter Henriette.

"E veramente magnifico! E bellissimo!" he exclaimed, as he ran his fingers over my keys. He played like an artist. No wonder. This was the great Zachau —Giovanni Zachau.

I had been lent to him by my makers, and he was supremely happy. The man was a genius. I could tell that by the magnetic current which passed into me from his finger tips.

He had played on me, perhaps, for half an hour, when he cried out to his wife, "Diocletian! Diocletian! Fetch me the manuscript!"

A CONSUMED OPERA

For many months Zachau had been thinking and dreaming of nothing but 'Diocletian,' the great Opera he was composing. It was to make his name and fame in the musical world.

Zachau was born in the Austrian province of Dalmatia, to the north-east of the Adriatic Sea. He knew the history of his country well, and had long determined to write a grand opera, with the Emperor Diocletian as its central figure, the first scene opening with the interior of the magnificent palace at Spalato. There were to be choruses by Goths, Hungarians, and Turks. This creation of his brain was to set Europe talking. It was to be a *magnum opus* in every sense of the word.

For effective opera, however, there are three essentials, namely, music, words, and visible action. The first and third he could ensure, but the words had long been a difficulty.

Unlike Wagner, Zachau was unable to write his own words. Many had been submitted to him, but none had suited; where he desired a serious effect, the comic element was introduced; other books, offered to him, were either not romantic enough or perhaps too lyrical.

All this I heard, because Zachau talked incessantly about his grand opera. He also corresponded with many well-known librettists.

My new master was evidently not a wealthy man; but he had many pupils who came to him for harmony lessons. Had he been less of an artist, he could doubtless have become very wealthy.

For me he had the greatest affection; and, as he had frequent visits from great musicians passing through London, I heard all the musical news that was

worth hearing. His room was filled with the signed photographs not only of celebrated musicians, but with portraits of many members of the aristocracy who had been pupils of his.

It was through one of his aristocratic friends that at last he found the book he was in need of for his opera. This was written expressly by no less an author than the great Victor Hugo.

This book was divided into the very acts and scenes which Zachau had planned. The story moved. In itself it suggested the overture, entr'acts, and introductions Zachau had already composed!

The artist was delirious with delight. Important as 'Diocletian' had been before, it was immeasurably more important now. He set about uniting and amalgamating the art of instrumental and vocal music with written speech, subordinating his music here and preponderating it there, so that libretto and music each seemed to have freedom to the fullest extent at the most appropriate situations. The whole, however, was well organised and systematically constructed, so that, whilst he expressed his innermost feelings by sounds, he did so without departing from the true tradition of grand opera.

To describe the gradual progress of the work would only be tedious to the reader. The overture was quickly finished. Zachau seemed delighted with it, although he subsequently re-wrote every note.

The recitative gave him food for considerable thought, and he came to a deadlock at the aria. The musical dramatic scene, however, was quickly finished, and then he stumbled and worried over the duet which followed. He had a capital trio, and some of the ensemble pieces were gems. Few musicians could

excel Zachau in the choruses he wrote, and his finale was the crowning glory of the work of his life.

Before my advent, Zachau had most of the opera in his brain; but the arrival of a libretto suitable for his purpose awakened so many new ideas that he was bewildered. Whether this trio for female voices should be in E flat or A flat; whether this allegro should be in C major or G major; whether this ensemble piece should be for four, five, or six voices, gave him a great deal of thought. Then, when the work was finished, Zachau considered it was not sufficiently calculated to keep up a warm interest in the listener. So he began it all again. The opera grew on him, it became a sort of disease. Wherever he went he was haunted by 'Diocletian.'

He wanted an extraordinary tenor voice for the title rôle. He had heard the greatest singers, but none of them pleased him. He needed a voice of unusual fulness and a peculiar *timbre*. Where could he find such a voice?

One night my master came into the house in a very excited state, hurrying along a poor wretched man he had found in the street.

"I have discovered my tenor!" he shouted to his wife. "Here! Bring the poor fellow something to eat and drink. He is nearly dead!"

In truth the new-comer was very ill indeed. Over-exposure on winter nights, and semi-starvation, had nearly killed him. The man turned out to be the son of a collier. Owing to his having a remarkable voice, he had contrived to come to London, thinking that his talents would be immediately recognised. They were not. He was forced to sing in the streets. Now that he had been rescued, and a reaction had taken place, nature had given way.

For some weeks Llewellyn Jones (that was the poor fellow's name) was dangerously ill.

Old Zachau and his wife nursed the sufferer. A doctor was expensive, but the musician thought nothing of that. 'Diocletian' was on his brain; the patient, if he recovered, would make a grand Diocletian. The musician saw possibilities, probabilities, certainties in the immediate future. And then the sufferer rallied. Before he was fit to sing, Zachau was teaching him the grand rôle of the opera. Llewellyn was grateful, and gratitude soon gave place to interest and admiration as he saw the beauties of the work. The two men were inseparable.

Mrs. Zachau saw, with growing distress, that her husband was neglecting everything for his great work. She believed in him implicitly, but, at the same time, she realised that 'a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush.' She tried to urge her husband, gently, to take more pupils, instead of declining those who were constantly applying to be taught by him. But this made Zachau angry. I could see that things were getting bad. At first his fur coat disappeared. Then plate, furniture, and sundry valuable books were sacrificed. Writs had been served on him, but he would take no notice. The opera enchained its creator. It was his passion. He might starve, but he would finish and produce his great work before he died. At last it was complete.

He was absent some days. Then he came back saying he had received an offer to bring it out from a Dr. Horngass, who had tried to lower his terms. My master had named his price, and did not care to bargain. He was confident, however, that the doctor wanted the opera, and would come to terms. "He

is rich, Sir Southdown Evel says so," observed Zachau.

Alas! Llewellyn, at this juncture, again broke down. He had never completed his cure.

The disease had now a firm hold of him. Mr. and Mrs. Zachau nursed the patient day and night. The doctors could do nothing.

I did not see the young man pass away, but I knew that death had visited the house. Zachau was beside himself with grief, for he had learnt to love the clever singer. It seemed that his one hope of finding an ideal interpreter for his title rôle was gone. One evening, the old man, holding the score of his opera in his hands, sat near the fire, sorrowfully.

As he sat, sadly and in silence, in that dreary room, now stripped of nearly all its furniture, he fell asleep. He was weary, because, for several nights, he had been watching at the bedside of the dying man.

I could see what would happen, but I was powerless to warn my master.

Slowly the score of that great work was slipping off his knees. It was slipping into the fire.

The tired man slept on.

Suddenly the flames kindled, and for fully ten minutes they blazed as if intent on setting the chimney on fire.

Then Zachau awoke.

He was dazed at first, and was humming an air from 'Diocletian.' Then he stood up, and stretched himself.

Suddenly his eyes seemed to start from their sockets, as he saw, in the grate, some charred pieces of paper.

"No, no, no! It cannot be," he cried, as a great fear seized upon him. Then he laughed at his own

fright. Next he sank on his knees and picked up the fragments. He brought them to a lamp, which was standing on my top, so that he could see the papers better.

"My God! My God! It is my life's work, 'Diocletian!'" he shrieked, and then staggered, like a drunken man, to the door.

What became of him for the next day I know not; but I do know that the grand opera was burnt and never rewritten.

Mrs. Zachau, poor thing, was frightened to death by her husband's absence, and started at every sound. She did not sleep that night, but sat near the window, sobbing and listening.

About eight o'clock next morning there was a knock at the door. The poor woman started up, crying out, "They have brought him back dead; I know it."

Timidly she answered the summons, but, instead of seeing her husband, she was accosted by a man with an order for execution. He took possession of her furniture, including myself, and, with a couple of men, began to take the furniture away.

Zachau had run too far into debt; I was seized.

At this moment my master returned. He saw that his goods were being taken without surprise. He was strangely calm.

"Mark you," he said, turning to the man in possession, "that piano, A 439, is not my property. I forbid you to seize it. It is the property of the makers. My landlord signed, before witnesses, a document to that effect. Seize it at your peril."

The man in possession used some very strong language; a van which had been sent by the creditors to take me away left without me.

The document which protected me ran as follows:—

"I, James Baker, hereby engage not to detain for rent, nor on any pretence whatever distrain on, the grand pianoforte A 439, sent on hire by the Makers to Giovanni Zachau, Esq., residing in my house, nor to allow the said pianoforte to be removed except by the Makers, and I undertake to deliver the same to them or to their order whenever they may demand it."

Here followed the signatures of the landlord, James Baker, and a witness. The document bore a sixpenny stamp; it was therefore legally quite in order.

This paper had been forgotten by the landlord, but not by my master. So, after it had been produced, I was allowed to remain.

Scarcely had the furniture been taken away than a fresh visitor arrived. This was Dr. Joseph Horngass. He had a long grey beard, big spectacles, and an unpleasant voice which sounded familiar to me, although its cockney accent was unfamiliar. He noted that the room had been denuded of furniture save of myself.

"Moving?" he inquired.

"What do you want?" asked Zachau.

"Your opera," replied Dr Horngass. "Look 'ere, you asked a thou' for it. That was nonsense. I am prepared to pay you a couple of 'undred down."

"No!" said Zachau.

"Three 'undred," offered the doctor.

"No!" cried my master.

"Come, now, don't be foolish. I'll make it three 'undred and fifty pounds," said Dr. Horngass, impressively.

"No! I tell you I would not take four hundred and fifty, five hundred and fifty, or six hundred and fifty pounds," exclaimed Zachau, wrathfully.

Dr. Horngass looked astonished, and shrugged his shoulders. "Very well, then," he said, reluctantly, "I don't like being imposed upon, but I will make it seven hundred pounds. You are very extortionate."

"It is *you* who are extortionate," yelled my master, banging the table with his fist. "If you had agreed to my price yesterday, I should have left the score with you. It was the outcome of a life's work. Remember, the sum I asked included all rights; it was a bargain. I now refuse to sell it."

"My dear fellow, don't be foolish," replied Dr. Horngass. "I will give you the thousand you ask."

"I do not ask it now," said Zachau; "you had your chance yesterday; you did not take it. I will not accept five, or even ten thousand for my opera now."

"You have sold it to someone else, then?" asked Dr. Horngass, surprised.

"I have not; I wish I had," replied Zachau. "I have no wish, sir, to talk further with you." He pointed to the door, and said, "I desire you to leave the house."

"Mad, mad, the musician is mad," muttered Dr. Horngass, as he put on his hat and prepared to leave. As he reached the door, however, he turned round. "Look 'ere," he said, in his cockney twang, "this is all bluff. Two can play at that game. You are a bankrupt; I know it. A thou' is more than your opera is worth, but I have a fad for operas, and wish to help you. I agree to take it and pay your own price, on one condition."

"What condition?" demanded Zachau, curiously.

"A condition which can make no difference to you," replied Horngass. "You will get two thousand sovereigns down, incur no risks whatever, and I shall probably lose every farthing I pay. It is a whim of

mine to see my name on the title page. All you have to do is to put on the front, 'Diocletian,' a grand opera in four acts, by Dr. Joseph Horngass, M.A., Mus.D., D.C.L."

Zachau, the composer, was too astonished to speak. He drew himself up, and looked at his visitor with withering scorn. "I do not think that I understood what you said just now," he remarked at last.

"All you've got to do is to put on the front of the music, 'Composed by Dr. 'Orngass,'" said the latter.

"But it would be a lie!" exclaimed old Zachau.

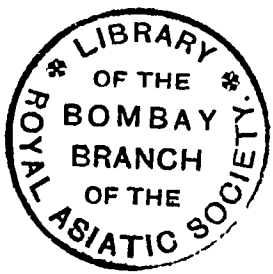
"Not at all, not at all, my boy," said the visitor, smiling; "it's business, that's what it is. If I buy a travelling bag in Piccadilly which bears a label inside saying it is made by the seller, that's not a fact, but it's business. If I go to a bookseller and have a book bound, and he puts his name inside as the binder, that's not correct, but it's business. Why, 'ang it all, I've seen pianners at music-shops with the names of the shopkeepers on the front, who could no more make a pianner than fly. It is just the same with me; I could no more write an opera than fly; but if I pay you 'andsomely, that opera's mine, and it's business to put my name across it."

"So you have shown your hand at last, Dr. Horngass," said Zachau. "You wish me to be your 'ghost!' You wish to masquerade as a composer when you are nothing but an ignorant humbug. For ten times two thousand I will not sell my opera on your conditions, even if I were starving. You are an unscrupulous, dangerous man, Dr. Horngass. Leave me!"

"Musicians are an unbusiness-like lot," said Dr. Horngass, contemptuously, as he departed.

Zachau saw him go. "Curse him!" he said. "Dio-

cletian' killed my friend Llewellyn. Diocletian has brought me ruin. Yet it is a good thing my opera was burnt. That fact has saved me from temptation, for, despite my brave words, I fear, in my present poverty, I could not have resisted that offer of two thousand pounds. Had I taken it I should have sold my soul."



X

THE BOGUS MUSIC COLLEGE

BY T. LEA SOUTHGATE
(Sec., Union of Graduates in Music)

POOR Zachau having come to grief financially, it was not long before I again found myself in the show-rooms of my makers, where I was termed the *Re-natus* by Jeremiah Jolly, who had charge of my room. He displayed his superiority by letting off bits of dog-Latin in emulation of the ex-lawyer's clerk at the factory. As for myself, I felt relieved to bid good-bye to Zachau, and longed for a master hand to touch my keys and pour out sweet melodies and make me thrill with noble harmonies.

Jolly, I ought to mention, after marrying had become ambitious. He had had the temerity to ask for a rise in his salary, had been reprimanded for his presumption, and, a fortnight later, had been promoted to the post of assistant salesman, because he knew how to 'try' a piano.

I had been in the show-room for three weeks when there entered an elderly man with white hair, long beard, and wearing gold spectacles. I recognised him; it was Horngass.

"I want, for the 'Middlesex College of Music,' a reg'lar fust-rater," he said to Jolly; "and look 'ere,

young man, it will do your people a power of good, for we'll put your firm down in our prospectus, and advertise yer all over the kingdom—and for the matter of that, abroad as well. So you'll have to take off a big reduction for cash."

"Certainly," replied the salesman; and approaching me, he said, "Now, here is a superb instrument we can sell you cheaply. It is the famous 'A 439' which Flügelbrecher used. It has been thoroughly repaired, and is as good as new. In fact, age has rather improved it."

"Oh, has it?" observed the customer. "How much do yer take off for your precious improvement? Now, 'fore yer make your price, think of the grand advertisement I can offer yer."

"Cash down, the price to you is £150 net," said Jolly.

"What do yer mean by cash down?" demanded the white-haired one, in a coarse, bullying voice. "Don't you think our Coll. is good enough? Do yer know our patron, a reg'lar nob, is in the House of Lords itself?" The tone and manner was so truculent that Jolly observed, "You had better arrange about the price in the office. Will you try the instrument?"

"Well, for the matter of that, my line isn't piano playing, though I can do a bit."

Sitting down to my keyboard, after some little calculating where to put down an accepted chord, Dr. Horngass struck me a hard blow. And then, pleased with himself, he observed, "Humph! not bad tone, is it? 'Ere you, just run over it; you're used to it. My 'ands are a bit cold." After the salesman's stereotyped runs and chords for display purposes, I was sold.

"Now look 'ere, young man," directed my new

master, "I want our name big on the side. You need not put on your firm's name; we'll advertise you well, never fear; paint in big gold letters, 'Middlesex College of Music.'"

"Yes, sir," replied Mr. Jolly. "Limited?" he continued.

"Who said *Limited?*" retorted my new master, in a savage tone. "Are you one of the Fleet Street press gang that's always taunting the Colleges with that hateful little word. What's it got to do with your people? I tell yer, we ain't *limited* for cash, and that's enough for you. Now mind, big letters and plain, none of yer fancy church type that people can't read easily, but heavy block letters a foot high; and, mind yer, I don't pay for that."

And then the pair left the room, and like "See-saw Marjorie Daw" in the old nursery tale, I had another new master, and one towards whom I felt an instinctive dislike.

In due time I was placed in my fresh home, a large room, covered, in the middle, with an offensively bright carpet on which I rested. In front of me was a long green baize table, round which were placed some heavy chairs, a roughly-carved large one standing at the head.

On the rose-tinted walls hung a few wretched daubs, and, from the names underneath the pictures, I perceived that they were intended to represent notable musicians.

In a glass show-case at the side were what purported to be—(1) Hair of Beethoven, (2) Score of Mozart's Quartet in E flat, (3) Handel's watch, (4) Mendelssohn's gold toothpick, (5) Bach's shoe lace, (6) Haydn's mug, and (7) The pen with which Wagner wrote "The Flying Dutchman."

Far more conspicuous than any of these objects were some highly ornamental Diplomas and Certificates in heavy gilt frames hanging on the walls. These were the issues of the establishment itself, and they represented the several Diplomas of Ass., Licen., and Fell. of the 'College,' all stated to be "Granted after passing the several examinations." They were evidently hung there as an incentive to ambitious pupils who came for lessons, and were anxious to get on.

In an oak Oxford frame was a 'Table of Fees' for these distinctions, together with the prices for hoods, gowns, caps, badges, and other appurtenances of the diplomas. It was stated that these distinguishing robes were very handsome, and followed University patterns according to the designs of a notable Twickenham *modiste*, constituting an elegant costume, specially adapted for the comfort of the wearer. For a slight extra payment the robes could be lined with silk of any desired shade to suit the complexion of the wearer.

In smaller frames hung some University Testamurs, by which I learnt that among the teachers working at the 'College' were men who had obtained degrees in music at various Universities. Some of them were situated in America, while one hailed from Spain and another from Timbuctoo. My sound-board failed me, and my hammers chattered, when I had taken in all my new surroundings, and read, in large letters across the gaudy imitation stained windows, 'Middlesex College of Music.' Alas! I knew I was in a bogus 'College,' and, having been made by an honourable firm, I felt the degradation keenly.

It was not long before I discovered for what purpose I was to be used. As the clock struck ten, to my surprise in came Miss Lindsay for a singing lesson.

The teacher was an ugly old man named Signor Cersonoli, about whose enforced retirement from one of the recognised establishments I had a vague recollection.

Of course he was a Fellow of the 'College,' and by the diploma hanging up was proclaimed to be a Laureate of the Music Conservatory of Cremona. Sitting down to the keyboard, he turned to Miss Lindsay and said, "Now, Miss, let me see what you can do. Where is your song?"

It was easy to perceive that Miss Lindsay was unwell; there was no colour in her cheeks, she looked haggard and ill-fed. The title of the song she placed on my desk was "I'd be a Bumble-bee," by Haines Berridue, Mus. Doc., F.M.C.M."

"Oh," said the Professor, "did I give you this? You know this song is a great favourite in the College. Berridue is one of our most popular examiners;" and then he added, *sotto voce*, "he is said to be well in with royalty."

"I daresay the song is popular," said Miss Lindsay, quietly, "but it does not suit me. I cannot get down to A; it seems altogether too low for me."

"Nonsense!" retorted the *maestro*, banging out the introduction; "have a try at it."

Miss Lindsay then commenced to sing. Her voice was a pretty soprano, sympathetic, but lacking in power. The song, however, was for a deep contralto, and, as the lesson proceeded, it was evident that the Signor had made a mistake, and was treating his pupil as if she were a contralto. Her low notes were often inaudible, despite the hammering out of the voice part that the master thought would assist her to sing. At last he got angry, and shouted, "Look here!

if you cannot put some more tone into your throat you will never get on."

"But, sir," remonstrated Miss Lindsay, "I cannot reach these notes; they are beyond my range. I have come to the 'College' for the advertised 'voice production' lessons: would it not be advisable to go through some scales and tone exercises before proceeding to songs?"

"Exercises?" shouted the Professor; "exercises? Didn't you say you wished to get engagements? Do you think people want to hear you sing exercises or scales? *Basta!* There is no time for that sort of thing." As for voice production, open your mouth and sing out; all the rest is humbug!"

And then he thumped my keys with such vehemence that, had not my hammer shanks and levers been of the best material, some must have snapped.

"Sing out louder!" he yelled; "I'll take your voice down a lot lower. Let us have the scale of A."

Then he made up a vile accompaniment, doubled thirds thickening the chords, and essayed to lead the trembling singer down to A. It was of no use. She stammered out that her throat ached and was tired, and she would try and practise more for the next lesson.

"Well," concluded he, "time is up. You may go now. Work away at those weak lower notes; when you have improved, the 'College' may get you an engagement at the Philharmonic."

So poor Miss Lindsay departed in tears, and I longed to tell the brute who was ruining her voice what I thought of him, of his method, and his incapacity.

The pair left the room together, and almost immedi-

ately there entered a tall, greasy-looking individual smoking a cigar, and came up to me. "So, this is the new purchase," said he, sitting down, and running his hands over my keys. He played with a certain facility, but without an atom of true feeling. As for musicianship, he could not join two chords properly together; and he kept down my damper pedal so continuously that the most complex harmonies were vibrating simultaneously from my sound-board; and I shuddered. To my surprise I saw that he wore silver bracelets, and I wondered whether these articles were part of the millinery paraphernalia of the 'College.' Apparently satisfied with his trial, he left the room, and returned for his lessons in his academical robes, and I then perceived that he was Timothy Juggins, Mus. Doc. Salamanca, LL.D. Buffalo, and Ass. of the 'College,' the chief pianoforte professor. He certainly looked well in his scarlet and watered-silk gown, and a mortar-board cap, with a gold tassel, added considerably to the get-up. He lolled on the piano stool, his cigar still in his mouth, and while he was doing a little scale exercise for the left hand with a hard unequal touch, the door opened, and in came Mrs. Mackay, dressed in deep mourning and looking much agitated.

"Well, my little woman," said Dr. Juggins, "and how is your hand getting on now?"

"Oh, doctor," she replied, "I hope you are right in the advice you gave me to get the tendon between the third and forth fingers cut, in order, as you said, that I might play Liszt perfectly; but I seem to be losing control over my fingers. To-day the hand is so painful I've had to bandage it, and am not fit to receive a lesson."

"All nonsense," he remarked. "I tell you that's all right. You must not give way if you want to rise to the top of the profession. Don't you know that Schumann did this, and look at his music; my eye, he was a topping player! I want you to come out with my 'Fire-fly Mazurka'; that'll make a sensation! Do you think you can play a bit now? If not, you'd better toddle, for I've got a concerto to put straight for a man. Only, mind you, this will have to count as a lesson, for I'm ready for you." Poor Mrs. Mackay sighed as she retired, and the Professor left immediately afterwards.

The next lesson was of a different character. A very pretty little lady came to be prepared for an examination. She was taken in hand by the Director of Examinations, a big fair man with piercing bright eyes, who claimed degrees from three universities, together with a long string of initials, and he wore quite a wonderful admixture of robes. His name was Dr. Caleb Cardross. It is only fair to say there was nothing vulgar or offensive in his manner.

"I understand you are the step-daughter of the well-known composer, Signor Zachau," observed Dr. Cardross.

"Oui, monsieur," replied the little woman, "and he vish me to read vis you for ze 'College' Ass. exam."

"That will be all right, although men mostly go in for these examinations," was the reply; "we may put you through with Honours."

"How often shall I come for ze lesson?" inquired the lady. (Good gracious! it was Mdlle. Henriette D'Annoy, who had sung so badly at Flügelbrecher's début.)

"Well, I think I can save you some trouble," replied

Dr. Cardross. "If you can keep a secret, I will tell you what you will have to answer" (reading from a manuscript). "Just take down these questions." He handed Mademoiselle a sheet of paper and pencil. She wrote slowly, and frequently interrupted, asking how to spell words, whilst the doctor dictated:—

"'1. Where do you find the root of the 7, 8, 9 chord?

"'2. Who taught Mendelssohn the guitar?

"'3. In four-part counterpoint how is the chord of the minor 19th on the sub-mediant resolved?

"'4. Why did Cherubini not use the serpent in his "Coronation Mass?"

"'5. What was Beethoven's favourite key?

"'6. Who was Muricidus, and what famous piece did he write?

"'7. How would you register the "Sonata Appasionata" on an American Organ?'

"Now, the following questions are for Honours:—

"*a*. What is the thermal length of an isochronal chord giving off A double sharp on vibrating in a temperature of 127° Fahrenheit?

"'*b*. Describe the construction of the Eastern Chin-fa-cer.

"'*c*. Score for the Mund harmonica, zither, and testudo strangulatus Mozart's "Ave Verum."

"'*d*. Show the acoustic difference between primary and secondary chords of the 14th.'"

"Oh, monsieur, I can never answer such difficulties," exclaimed Mdlle. D'Annoy.

"Tut, tut!" jocularly replied Dr. Cardross, "you have a whole month to find out the answers. If you look about, it will save you trouble in coming here; and my fee will only be five instead of the usual ten guineas."

Then the doctor came to the keyboard, struck C, E,

G, and continued—"We may as well have an ear test; what sort of chord is that?"

Without hesitation, Mademoiselle answered, "A common chord."

"Capital," said the master, "what a marvellously sharp ear you have; you ought to obtain the Queen's Gold Medal. Now, prepare yourself for the exam., and don't be nervous. There is no occasion for nervousness with *us*." With that cheering consolation, the candidate for a diploma departed.

I next witnessed quite another scene. The room was prepared for a meeting of the Council of the 'College'; books, printed forms and reports, etc. were brought in by clerks, a special pile being put by the Chair and the Secretary's seat. A liberal supply of foolscap, blotting-paper, and pens was arranged in front of each seat.

There presently came in the salaried officials and members of the Board of Examinations, Board of Studies, Department of Robes, General Purposes Committee, Literary Section, and ordinary Members of the Council. First entered the Secretary, J. Wickud Smoles, Mus.D. Milwaukee, LL.B., with the Registrar, Smockin Tight, Mus.B. University of the West, Phil. Doc. Göttingen, F.Y.C.G. I soon learned the names and titles of the others as they entered the Council Chamber. Moses Graball, Financial Secretary, Ass. Inst. Actuaries, F.X.C.M.; Mirchell Leysett, Organising Local Secretary, Mus.D. Kansas, Fell. Luesian Inst.; Edward Stage Hurst, Mus.D. Oxon.; Field Orland, Mus.D. Chicago, F.Z.O.; Sharpe Sharpe, F.P.C.M.; Patrick All Stoop, Mus.B. Dublin; Honey Botham, Advertisement Agent, F.Z.O.; Kroker Smitums, Mus.D. Cantab.; and in addition to these

there were several dummies whose names I did not gather. All of these gentlemen likewise rejoiced in the distinction of being Fellows of their own institution (F.M.C.M.). And then appeared some ornamental and paid patrons:—Sir Southdown Evel, Bart.; Hon. Andrew Slowe, and Dr. Francis Hutcheson-Desbois, who was Physician to the College. Certainly it did not look a very musical assembly. The Chief Secretary, I found, had been a schoolmaster and then an election tout; the Financial Secretary had run 'a bucket shop'; Dr. Juggins had travelled in the hardware line, and was a self-taught pianist. The Registrar was an assistant teacher in a Ragged School. The chief of the literary section had been a Methodist preacher and then a lawyer's clerk; Mr. Tight was once a member of a nigger troupe; Field Orland had been a hairdresser's assistant; Dr. Leysett was an ex-postman; Hurst, Stoop, and Smitums had genuine degrees, and did not seem to be quite at their ease in the assembly, and, curiously enough, they were regarded with a mixture of deference and contempt. Sir Southdown Evel was a bankrupt pickle-manufacturer. Hon. Andrew Slowe was the son of Lord Muc; he had gambled away a fortune, and afterwards made a precarious living on the stage until discovered by the Manager of the 'College' as a capital talker and useful at local meetings. Dr. Hutcheson-Desbois was a fashionable physician of good presence, and proved of considerable use to the 'College'; he had lately had to retire from a notable West-End Club through an accident which occurred while he was playing cards. All the officials and musicians were in their University and College robes, and a galaxy of bright colours they appeared—gowns of all hues and divers cuts, they were indeed essential

and distinguishing robes of a rich and handsome effect as advertised.

I must not relate the small talk which beguiled the time till the Managing Director made his appearance. To tell the truth, some seemed ashamed of their fellows, and were chiefly anxious to learn what dividend they were likely to obtain. At last the great man came in, Dr Joseph Horngass, M.A., Buffalo Mus.D. Chicago, D.C.L. Delagoa Bay; he was dressed in quite a complicated set of robes. I quivered, and some of my strings throbbed, as I recognised the individual who had so recently bought me. Dr. Horngass was greeted with a salvo of applause, for which he stiffly bowed, and at once proceeded to take the Chair, and thus began his speech:—

"Sir Charles, Mr. Honourable Slowe, gentlemen and brother musicians, we are met 'ere to-day in pursuance of our Articles of Association. Before I say anythink to yer about our business, I must ask our Secretary to see that none but members of the Company are present, and then to lock the door. I'm not going to trouble yer with any long speech. I know what yer are a-thinkin' of. The fact is, we are 'ere to divide the swag, and I can just tell yer in advance you'll want pretty big pockets to carry it away." (There was much rapping on the table and cries of "Bravo!" at this welcome intimation.) "But look 'ere," he continued, "some of yer may think that's good enough; I don't! We must increase our business and, of course, our profits. The public is what Shakespeare called him, 'an hass!' Gentlemen, we live mainly on 'hasses,' and the more, the better for us. Now, Mr. Secretary, just give us a summary of what yer know. Don't go to make a speech (of which, I should say, you're too fond); you're not

running an election now, Dr. Smoles. Don't we pay our esteemed colleague, Hon. Andrew Slowe, to do the speechifying? And jolly well he does it, too; he's our travelling speaker, and not *slow* to catch the local swells and do his work." ("Hear! hear!" proceeded from gentlemen sitting round the table.) Dr. Wickud Smoles then arose, and, with military precision, said :— "Students entered during the Academical year 235,798, passed 234,647." "That's good, very creditable indeed," observed Sir Charles Evel. "Can't say I'm over-satisfied," threw in Mr. Sharpe Sharpe; "the Examiners might have passed 1000 more, instead of having to return half-fees, and then it would have left a decent margin of failures for show purposes."

"You leave the Examiners alone, and stick to your London Theory lessons," retorted the Organising Local Secretary.

"I consider the pianoforte playing requirements too high," interposed Dr. Juggins.

"I feel I must support the Examiners in their decisions," said Dr. Hurst.

"And so do I," added Mr. Stoop. "The papers are often taunting us with passing everybody, and giving away honours and medals as freely as curses on a Saturday night."

"'Ere, stop that jaw," exclaimed the Chairman, giving the table such a thump to emphasise his interruption, that he made me hum with the shock.

"You're not in the examinin' room now, yer Oxford, Cambridge, and Dublin men, and don't yer give yourselves such superior airs. I tell yer plainly, as I've told yer before, we've engaged—*bought yer*, I should say—for your position and titles. They look well on our prospectus, though I don't think much of

'em. Yer can't get a livin' out of Oxford and Cambridge titles; I know lots a-starvin', and serve 'em right for their upstart pretensions—why, heaps of 'em can't play at all! As a knowing writer says, 'If the Universities gave musical titles for practical performances, there'd be precious few Mus. Bacs. and Docs.' So, just yer graduates, as they call yer, shut up! Haven't I been generous enough to give you a share apiece in our 'College,' and ain't you well paid for your blessèd names and work? What more do yer want?"

After this torrent, Messrs. Hurst and Smitums kept silence. Not so Mr. Stoop, who, being Irish, could not quite restrain himself. Still, with bated breath, he observed, "I think, Mr. Director, my university colleagues have looked at this as a question of the balance of art."

"Balance of art?" shouted the now infuriated Horngass, "The only art we should go for is the *art* of making money; and as to *balance*, just you ask our Financial Secretary what that is." Thunders of applause drowned the rest of the sentence; the only words I could catch were 'conscientious fools,' 'ridiculous fancies,' 'reptile press of Fleet Street.'

When quietude was restored, Mr. Stoop said, "I should like to ask the Director of Examinations how he selects the music in our Examination Syllabus? I ask, because certain of our members are greatly favoured in the list, and must derive quite an income from the inclusion of their pieces and their painful disarrangements from the great masters, while I am not favoured with a look in for any of mine!" Here a considerable disturbance arose from the Chief of the Board of Examinations telling the fervid Irishman he was a jealous fool! Cries of "Sit down, turn him out," were audible

through the din, till the voice of the Chairman—wonderfully stentorian for an old man—was heard exclaiming, "Do you want 'em to hear us at the Perlice Court? Stop it off!"

The next to rise was the gentleman who sold the 'College' robes. He reported that the demand for these, from those who passed, was increasing, particularly among the ladies; and he thought the prices might be raised. He mentioned that their Twickenham designer had brought out a sweet creation in the scarf line, brilliant and becoming for the junior grades; he asked for authority to adopt this, and said it would certainly produce a considerable revenue. ('Hear, hear.') He recommended the discontinuance of the issue of the bright pewter medals; they were not showy enough, and were too cheap. Finally, he reported a profit of £7389 in his department, and he sat down amidst much applause.

The Chairman rose, and declared this to be most satisfactory, and advised that the new decoration should be passed by acclamation, which was done. He threw out for consideration a thought whether they might not have special 'College' buttons for gentlemen and ornamental shoe-buckles for lady diploma-holders. He said notice had been given him by one who was never satisfied—and here he made a conspicuous pause and looked hard at Dr. Hurst—of a proposal to alter their essential and distinguishing robes on account of some likeness to the Oxford garments. For his part, he considered we should be independent of such prehistoric places; they ought to think themselves honoured in that our go-ahead active young institution had designed; in a measure, to copy their old monkish robes. It wasn't done without a reason—

and here he stopped and laughed, several evidently appreciating the joke. He continued—"In sympathy with what the able head of the robe department has said, I am inclined to raise the price of our 'millinery' (as that wretched scribbler, Südthor, contemptuously terms it), one guinea; and in order to make the robes more worth the money, put five shillings' worth of gold braid round the collar!" ('Hear, hear.') "But this is for the department to see to, not for this meeting to fuss over."

Sir Southdown Evel, who owned himself a lady's man, suggested whether, in the case of their lady diploma-holders, there might not be a choice of colours —say, blue and silver for fair girls, and scarlet and gold for dark ones. Dr. Leysett thought they had better leave ladies' dresses alone, to which a voice, the owner of which I could not see, remarked, "I don't know so much about that; lots of people make a good living fiddle-faddling over women's frocks."

Mr. Honey Botham, as chief of the advertising, a great spending department, suggested the abandonment of the tuition scheme. He declared that the receipts from this were insignificant in comparison with what was taken for the exams. themselves. He maintained that young people did not want to be taught by the College; they desired something far more substantial, and he objected to wasting money over what he considered a mere pretence. This brought up Dr. Wickud Smoles, the Secretary, who said, "To you, brother proprietors, I frankly admit that tuition is a pretence, but we must do something to let the public believe we are a real College, and hence the lessons' scheme. While on my legs, I cannot help remarking on the well-directed skill with which Mr. Honey Botham, our chief, and his smart assistant, Mr. Field Derlaven, con-

trived to get paragraphs into the local papers. An anonymous scoundrel has called it 'bribery'; but I call it *business*, and excellent business too. And, in this compliment, I wish to add the name of the gentleman in charge of their literary department, Dr. J. Honsbuit, and his assistant, Mr. Puffer. Speaking for myself, I always read with much interest their delicate little paragraphs of the Royalties and other folks who have attended our prize distributions, and I think that Dr. Mans Dofello deserves special thanks for his neat history of the College in our Year-book."

Dr. Kroker Smitums said he would like to ask the Chairman who received the profit of all the examination music and books sold by the 'College' to the candidates? The Secretary was on his feet in an instant, and sternly said, "Dr. Smitums, stick to your lesson-giving, and don't be impertinent."

The Chairman thereupon rose and said, if there were no further questions he would proceed with his financial statement.

This brought up the irrepressible Irishman, Mr. Stoop. "I should like to know," he asked, "if any action has been taken with respect to the various libels against the 'College' in several London and country papers? Whether the statement, that our advertisements were scornfully refused by a musical journal, is true? Whether the Secretary has given up the practice of selling diplomas without examination? Whether an effort is to be made, by appeal, to obtain a reversal of a recent conviction at the Police Court? Whether it is correct that Lord Whitechapel has resigned his Vice-Presidency, although his name still ——" Here arose such disorder and din, with cries of 'You're another!' 'impostor!' 'liar!' 'spiteful brute!'

'mere jealousy!' etc., that a fight seemed imminent. Eventually, by banging the table, the Chairman obtained quiet. Addressing Mr. Stoop, he said—"As a great dead statesman has remarked, 'Ireland is the root of all evil,' and it's pretty true! If yer don't mind, sir, I'll turn yer out of the College."

"Try it on!" hotly retorted the Irishman. "I'm not a fool, and I know a mighty deal too much; keep your cheek for your own gang. If you make it too nasty for me, I shall feel obliged to pay a visit to Fleet Street! I have no sham degree like some of you fellows."

The cries of 'shame,' 'shame,' did not cause Mr. Stoop to sit down, but the Chairman whispered to the Secretary, who, accompanied by the Financial Secretary, left the room for a few moments. Returning to the table they threw down, in front of the Chairman, several bags of coin, the sight and sound of which acted like oil on troubled waters. Mercury and Pluto had ousted Mars. "Och hone," said the Chairman facetiously, "shure we're not at Donnybrook a-fightin', but in a more illigant place a-going to pocket oof." Good humour seemed to be restored, and he continued:—

"Now, let us get on to something pleasanter than tearin' one another's eyes out of their sockets. Before yer lighten this"—giving a dig at the gold bags—"I'll just ask our worthy Financial Secretary, the Cerberus as guards the coin, to tell yer what we've got to play with. And, Mr. Graball, cut it short—I mean yer speech, not the money—for I've got somethin' to say myself."

Mr. Moses Graball then rose, and said: "I've got to obey the boss, though I should like to make some remarks at unnecessary hofficers and ditto hexpenses. Oh! yer may 'iss and swear, Dr. Juggins, but I've got

hopinions as well as you. Well, here goes, I see you want it, like the Manx cat's tail, short and neat:—Profit on Hexams., £23,482; on Robes and essential vestments—as Smoles calls 'em—£7389; Musical Instruments sold to candidates, £1076."

"How as to music and books?" interposed Stoop. Not noticing the interruption, the speaker proceeded: "Sale of music paper, pens, inks and etceteras to candidates, £981. Profits on Colonial centres, £1031. Fees on receiving Certificates, £1582. Oxford frames for holding 'em, £792. Admission Tickets to view the Exams. and attend the Pupils' concerts, £549. Tuition fees, £19. Grand Total, £36,890. That works out a Dividend of £14 per share." The applause that succeeded the statement was not quite unanimous, and, when it had died down, Mr. Sharpe Sharpe said: "I take it that the statement just made represents net profits. I would like to ask what had been the gross receipts over the year? And what had been the expenses of the various Departments, particularly the item of Examiners' fees?" To this the Chairman replied: "You can ask what yer like, but yer ain't on the General Purposes Committee, and ain't entitled to know, so there now."

After a brief pause, Dr. Joseph Horngass spoke as follows: "I won't detain yer long for what I know yer all a-waitin' for, but I feel called on just to give yer a few reminders. You each know how many shares you've got, and what you've got to take; I knows some of yer are a-thinking I takes a big lump; on my 2001 shares I reckon I book twenty-eight thousand pound. Well, ain't I worth it? Haven't I earned it for yer? Who saw a future for the College when it was no better than a miserable little teaching class? Who knew the public

was a-pantin' for an easy-got and handsome certificate? Who's built up the business you're a-livin' on? Haven't I given the public—the hasses, I say—just what they want, and ain't they very well satisfied? More than that, who bought up and registered the title 'Middlesex College of Music,' and tricked those vile literary gents jealous of our success by enrollin' our institution under Government auspices, without the obligation to say how many shareholders we've got, to file our accounts, or even to publish 'em—and I say it also to you gentlemen, even to issue or publish any sort of a balance-sheet? Who, who, who, has done all this? Why, Dr. Joseph Horngass, M.A., Mus.D., and D.C.L., and no one else! I'm takin' my due, and no more. Yer ought, every one of yer, to congratulate yourselves you've got such a tidy one to think for yer, and work for your interests. Didn't I get a fine list of Patrons for yer, mostly Members of both Houses of Parliament, and don't their names look noble on our papers? There's lots think it the Royal College of Music. I've got somethink better to do than to improve their ignorance. And these nobs, if they're not paid, they all get a present, and so it's much the same thing. Ain't we got Oxford, Cambridge, Dublin and London University men with us, and acting as Examiners all over the country? Very fine some of 'em think themselves; but they haven't quite enough gumption for us; *we* come to a decision on 'Passes' and 'Honours' *up here*, for head-quarters must hold the supreme power, as they are responsible, not the mere examiners. We've had ups and downs, mostly ups; after all, the disgraceful abuse by the silly music journals that call us 'Proprietary,' and the ridiculous exposures of *Truth* don't much hurt us. We've got Government protection for

our business, and no obligations—only to make money; what do yer think of that? 'Ask where the profits go to,' says an infernal M.P. 'Find out,' replies I, and that is more than all the clever ones can do with the Board of Trade a-leadin' the way. Gentlemen, I've knocked about somewhat in my time, and I've often laid awake a-thinkin' of your welfare, and you ought to bless me for all I've done for yer. But I ain't finished yet. I'm now planning out a scheme of Free Scholarships, only we must make the scholars pay mighty well for themselves; and that will be a sort of addition to our new method of 'compounded fees' for turning out first-rate musicians quite completed. We're doing good 'biz' with this already; we fix the amount when we find out what the pupils and their friends can afford. (Ha! ha!) And we're going to run a special church diploma; three guineas for the title on illuminated parchment, hood and real gold cross complete; it will be obtainable by all budding musicians who can play a double chant. No trouble with 'limited' now; I've done 'em, and secured a splendid title, there's the *art*; the *balance* is at the bankers. Of course, people won't take diplomas sold by Dr. Horngass & Co., but they pouch 'em readily when issued by the 'Middlesex College of Music.' It's down in the deed in the Government Office that we are directors for life, and yer may tell people there are no shareholders—we're members, or proprietors if you choose to say so. (Ha! ha!) We're all in the same boat, and if it is at times rocky, well, gentlemen, the public is an hass, an awful hass, and we have to live; people *like* to be humbugged. As for law, I 'ate it, but sometimes we've got to put our lawyers on to the weak uns, and threaten 'em when they write to the saucy local papers, and try to choke

candidates off. Messrs. Snatchum and Tearum don't always succeed, but they must be paid, that's a part of our trade expenses. But I don't care for law; it's like a cobweb. It catches the flies, and lets the hornets through. Gentlemen, I'm proud to say *I'm* a hornet."

At the recital of all this wickedness and trickery I shuddered, and let my desk fall with a loud clap, considerably startling the company.

"Now," continued Dr. Horngass, "I'll tell yer what I'm going to do; yer see these 'ere bags of gold? I'm going to give every blessed man-jack of yer a present of ten sovereigns out of my own pocket, mind yer, besides your dividends, just as a pleasant surprise to yer; there! what do yer say to that?" The applause was deafening, and my sound-board reverberated with the din. When silence was restored, Sir Charles Evel rose to formally propose the adoption of the report and dividends, and expressed his thanks, on behalf of the members of the company, for the handsome bonus the director had added. This was seconded by Dr. Hutcheson-Desbois, and carried, amidst the clinking of the coin, as the two secretaries counted it out, and handed it round.

The room was soon emptied, the last to leave being Mr. Stoop, the impulsive Irish Mus.B. Before he did so, he came up to me, looked at the keyboard, and sitting down, after a few trial chords, played, with a delicacy of touch and intellectual grasp which surprised me, the Prelude and Fugue in C No. 1 from old Bach's 'Well-Tempered Clavier.' As he got up to leave, I had the satisfaction of hearing him murmur: "What a beautiful piano, much too good for this degrading place."

Three days after this meeting, the officials of the

College received a surprise visit. Flügelbrecher, who had come over to England, had become acquainted with the way in which Miss Lindsay and Mrs. Mackay were being treated at the 'College.' He quickly perceived that one was having her voice spoilt, and the other her hand ruined by the ignorant treatment of the charlatans; so he came, with the ladies, to demand the compounded fees, out of which they had been swindled. There was considerable clamour in the office, and presently the ladies, Flügelbrecher, Dr. Wickud Smoles, the secretary, with Dr. Horngass, came into my room to get away from the clerks, and talk the matter over. Flügelbrecher was too angry to listen to the specious excuses the two officials put forth. He demanded a return of all the money paid in advance, and compensation for the injury done. Now and then he looked at Dr. Horngass with a curious, puzzled air, while he threatened legal proceedings. The director laughed scornfully at this, and, irritated, the German pianist at last struck him. In an instant the two men were struggling together. As Flügelbrecher, in the tussle, clutched wildly at his assailant, to the surprise of everyone, suddenly off came the venerable white beard and wig of Dr. Horngass, and lo! Klug stood before them!

With a piercing scream Mrs. Mackay exclaimed, "My husband's murderer!" Miss Lindsay turned deathly pale and tried hard not to faint. But before Flügelbrecher could recover himself, Klug had darted out, and, though followed, had disappeared. The police were quickly on the spot, but too late, the inspector remarking, "I knew we should have a job here, some day."

I was much agitated by what had occurred, and longed

for Flügelbrecher again to touch me, but it was not to be. My old friends departed, and I heard the next day, with no regret, that the 'College' was to be closed for 'repairs,' and I was ordered to be sold. I could not but feel a measure of thankfulness at the prospect of a speedy escape from the Bogus College.

XI

A GENUINE MUSICAL DEGREE

BY RAYMENT KIRBY
Mus. Bac. (Durham)

IN the drawing-room of a small country house was where I next dwelt. It was a cosy little room, although neither handsome nor luxurious. A few chairs, a horsehair sofa, a small writing-table, and a sideboard, constituted the furniture. The four pictures on the walls were cheap copies of old masterpieces. But this plainness was relieved by many fragrant and pretty flowers — mostly sprigs of honeysuckle — tastefully arranged in bowls and vases about the room. On the mantel-shelf stood a handsome marble and bronze clock embellished with an inscription plate; on either side of it was a vase containing a big bunch of money-wort, so often found in country homes. With the exception of the presentation time-piece, I was the only article of intrinsic value in the room—and I must own that I took up a great deal of space. Nevertheless, the aspect of the apartment denoted contentment and domestic happiness, which is better than an ostentatious display of wealth.

But to go back to the actual time for the beginning of this chapter. At the small writing-table sat the Rev. Harvey Lindsay, a man of about fifty years of

age, preparing a sermon. His hair was iron grey. He was clean-shaven and somewhat stern of aspect. Yet when he spoke, a kindliness about his face made me feel that his was a tender heart. From a worldly standpoint, his had not been a grand career. He had descended, on his maternal side, from a good old Dutch family, but his people were without influence. At 25, he had married the daughter of his first vicar, whose ancestry was as historic but as uninfluential as his own. And now, after more than a quarter of a century of patient and conscientious ministerial labour, he was passing rich on no more than £150 per annum; with a wife, two comely daughters (one already a widow), his son John, and two young grandchildren, to a great extent dependent on him.

John, the only son, was 17. He had just quitted school, and it was necessary that he should seek employment in order to help swell the family exchequer.

His tastes, and the expenses of the curriculum, were against his entering the Church. Left to himself, his heart was set on music and musicians, and his inclinations were encouraged by his sisters, Mrs Mackay (the widow) and Gertrude Lindsay, who—as we know—were both intensely musical and both victims to bad music teaching. John delighted to deputise—although without payment—at the organ in the church of St. Gregory at Southburn, not far from the musical city of Biremouth, where his father was senior curate, and he would usually take the children's services. Like many aspiring musicians who are not possessors of diplomas from *bonâ fide* musical institutions, John had vainly endeavoured to obtain an organ appointment, and had been equally unsuccessful in his attempts to get pupils from among the juveniles of the parish.

His father was too calvinistic to sympathise with John in his musical desires. In fact, the Rev. Harvey Lindsay—unmindful that 'Music is the handmaid of Religion,' declared music to be 'no respectable calling,' and, in his old-fashioned way, regarded musicians as "vagabonds and play-actors."

He urged his son to be sensible, and accept a local bank-clerkship which had recently been offered to him, but which was repugnant to John's ideas. John loathed the thought of clerking more and more each time the post was urged upon him. A musician, and nothing but a musician, was what he desired to be. Nevertheless, he would sacrifice his inclinations if he could help his father, but was he likely to earn as much, eventually, in an uncongenial calling as he would by music? He doubted it.

John's love for music did not come from his father, but his mother. She, when quite young, was so good a pianist that her services were much in request, and she was regarded as a musical prodigy; so she had had frequent opportunities of displaying her undoubted powers in accompanying instrumental as well as vocal solos; and the fact of her appearing at any musical function was a guarantee that the programme would be of an unusually high standard. John's love for music was therefore no passing fancy, neither was Mrs. Lindsay's sympathy with her son's desire a lukewarm one. There were ways of getting John musically educated, but all her arguments and pleadings with her husband were of no avail. The Rev. Harvey Lindsay had made up his mind on the subject—he considered it his duty to be adamant. To the bank John had to go, and Mrs. Lindsay marvelled that John acquiesced without making a scene.

Providentially, as it would seem, Miss Marie Ruckers, Mrs. Lindsay's sister, died a few weeks after John became a junior bank-clerk. This aged lady had been particularly fond of the curate and his family. She had long been in the habit of paying periodical visits to them, when she would devoutly listen to her brother-in-law's somewhat prosy sermons, and participate in parochial work. She had not, however, stayed with the curate since her health had become feeble. Her decease, although unexpected, was therefore not the shock to the Lindsays it otherwise might have been.

Before the will was read, neither the Rev. Harvey Lindsay nor any member of his family anticipated a legacy. Aunt Ruckers was thought to be extremely poor. It was found, however, that she had left £2000, half of which was bequeathed to the 'Poor Pious Clergy' Society, £500 to an hospital, and the other £500 to her brother-in-law—a comparative fortune to an impecunious man. This was how some new furniture had been added to the curate's home; how £100 was finally placed at John's disposal for the furtherance of his musical studies, and how the old lady left "to my dear god-daughter Gertrude Marie Waelrant Ruckers Lindsay," a picture, black with age, of which more anon.

Out of John's £100 I had been bought, at the auction following the bankruptcy of the Middlesex College of Music; so I, also, was beholden to Aunt Ruckers. I shudder to think of where I might have gone to, had I not been purchased by the Lindsays.

How painfully do I remember that sale! The room, being unused, the thermometer in it fell considerably, while I rose considerably—in pitch, I mean. Varying temperatures are bad for constitutions such as really

good pianos possess, and I am, constitutionally, something more than a good piano. Anybody who has heard me in my prime, and knows anything about tone and tune, must acquiesce in Herr Flügelbrecher's assertion that I "was ze finest of all bianos." This super-excellence no doubt made me super-sensitive and justifiably proud. Among those at the sale who came to inspect me, prompted by mere curiosity, were some school boys who had the impudence to strum on me 'Three blind Mice,' while less proficient even than these was a tiny girl who inflicted me with a most incorrect rendering of some five-finger exercises. One old lady startled me by playing the 'Maiden's Prayer,' and still worse, a damsel with red hair and a squint, and many sham rings and bangles, pounded right through the 'Battle of Prague.' When she came to the part called 'Cries of the wounded,' I felt my humiliation so keenly that my veneer could scarce refrain from weeping tears of glue, and my bullet-wound nearly broke out afresh.

When relating these painful experiences to a piano friend of mine, he counselled me to make "light of such trifles." Nevertheless I, for my part, felt them very much indeed, and feared they were likely to continue, because at the sale there were—think of it—for me—the famous Flügelbrecher piano—no bidders! My size was against me. I was measured by everyone who visited the place—sometimes with umbrellas and occasionally with tapes—and all passed me by, being unable to give me house-room. Fortunately, in the hour of my despair, it came to the knowledge of Gertrude Lindsay, through Mrs. Mackay, that I was for sale; so John hastened down to the auction. He was just in time. A Jew—one Moses Solomon, who smelt

of garlic—had offered £35. Impulsively John bid £40, and for that very small sum, I—who was once priced at 300 guineas—was sold, being heartily glad to escape the clutches of the said Solomon, and to leave a place which had been a purgatory to me.

John was overjoyed and excited on seeing me installed in his father's house. It was a tight squeeze, but they got me in somehow. The family welcomed me jubilantly, and John played on me for hours. He was constantly remarking on the sonorousness of my tone, and the beautiful elasticity of my touch. The neighbours flocked in to see me; so I was tried by all sorts and conditions of players; and by their words of appreciation and smiles of admiration, I began to again feel like my former proud self, and my polish assumed a good deal of its original gloss.

When the novelty of my arrival had abated, John set to work to practise regularly upon me. I found that rather trying, for he had an uneven touch, and made many mistakes. On the other hand, he was evidently musical at heart and really loved me. So I determined, by always sounding my very best, to add fuel to the fire by kindling in him an ambition to become a recognised artist. Yet John seemed presently to wonder at me. I noticed him looking confused and worried; surely nothing was wrong with myself? What could cause my owner's puzzled looks? I was completely mystified, until, one evening, I heard John explaining how difficult he found it "to play in one key, and, as it seemed to him, to hear the music in the key above." His friends could not grasp his meaning, and knowingly thought that "too much music was making him mad."

"You fail to understand me," he argued. "It so

happens that I can name any note, from the lowest of a 32 ft. organ stop to the highest sound audible, or I can name any combination of notes, on hearing the sounds, and without seeing the keyboard. In fact," he added, "after a note is sharpened or flattened beyond a certain distance, the sound produced has, to my ear, passed to either the region of the note above or below." From this explanation, it was realised that John possessed that wonderful and useful gift, the sense of absolute pitch. It was indirectly due to me that this was discovered; and I now knew the cause of John's anxiety, for I remembered that when in the auction room I was very cold, and had consequently risen in pitch. Being always kept at 'French' I must, as John felt, have, "passed to the region of the next semitone above." He, therefore, had me lowered again to the 'Diapason Normal,' after which he resumed his practising with vigour and contentment.

When his father heard John 'strumming,' as he called it, hour after hour (scales and exercises not being interesting to unmusical listeners), the Rev. Harvey Lindsay shook his head in disapproval. The poor curate wished, with virtuous indignation, that, instead of frittering his time away with music, his son might see the wisdom of studying Plumptree's *Law of Bankers*, Wilson's *Practice of Banking*, or even the American *National Bank Act*. It must be confessed that John's 'strumming' did not expedite the Sunday sermon. But John was ignorant of this. With praiseworthy diligence he rose very early in the morning, to the displeasure of the maid, who grumbled and cried, "Drat that Master John!" as she dusted me with a gritty cloth in a spiteful way, scratching my complexion badly. John would then enter the room with his

eager eyes fixed on me, before beginning his theoretical studies. These he had commenced three years before with a neighbouring musician, none other than my good friend Zachau, who claimed to be a lineal descendant of Handel's first master. John was anxiously keeping up this branch of his art, as well as the practical work; and, as he had observed that musicians holding a university degree often succeeded in securing appointments, while others, minus that distinction, frequently failed, he determined to qualify for, and take, the Mus.B. degree. So he began by obtaining particulars from the different universities. His father being a Cambridge man, John, not unnaturally, wished to graduate there also; but the parents' shallow pocket would not admit of this, because, on looking through the new regulations, it was found that residence was required. Moreover, John rightly felt that, even if circumstances had allowed of his going up to Cambridge, three precious years would not be turned to the best account, as chances of hearing good orchestral music are sadly wanting in an English 'Varsity town, and his musical progress during that period would suffer.

After further reflection, he decided on reading for the Mus. B. Durham degree, for which the literary test, though sufficient, dispensed with a knowledge of foreign languages; but the musical examination was searching and severe, the scheme following closely the Oxford lines, while the fees—a vital point with him—were less.

This matter settled, he made arrangements to read with his old schoolmaster during six months. He then communicated with the Registrar of the University, sent his fee, and, in due course, received word that the examination for the "Certificate of Proficiency in

General Education" would take place in three weeks.

During the time spent with his coach, John had continued to pursue his musical studies, making a point of doing theoretical exercises if travelling for his bank anywhere by rail, and of committing to memory dates and noteworthy facts connected with musical history and acoustics, while out walking. He was a methodical youth, and tabulated a digest of all required subjects wherewith to refresh his memory at odd moments.

At last the eventful day arrived for John to depart for Durham. The postmaster of that city happened to be a friend of his. John therefore arranged to lodge quietly with his friend, rather than stay at a noisy hotel which the majority of the candidates might patronise. Reaching the quaint old town in the afternoon, John was heartily greeted by the postmaster and his wife, and, after a substantial meal, found his way to the Cathedral, heard the conclusion of the service, and then made himself acquainted with the locality, noting the time occupied in the journey from his 'diggings' to the examination room, so as to be punctual next morning. I gathered these particulars from the graphic accounts John wrote to his mother, which filled that worthy lady with a subject of never-ending conversational interest. John, for instance, wrote that "the Cathedral clock seems to be lightning-like in its movements. No sooner have the hours struck, than the quarter chimes follow in rapid succession." "Dear me," said Mrs. Lindsay, "why cannot they get that clock regulated?" "At the conclusion of the second day here," he continued, "I felt that, after the work, together with the excitement of yesterday's journey, I needed some diversion; so I visited a travelling circus

which arrived here a few days ago. I spent a couple of delightful hours there in company with a fellow-student, next to whom I had been seated during the day. That night, I retired to dream of horses and acrobats, indescribably mixed up with Arithmetic, Consecutive fifths, and Geography! But the circus nevertheless did me good."

Next morning, another letter said he was out early, and breakfast over, went to ascertain if he had been successful with his 'Proficiency' examination work of the day before. To his joy, he found his name on the pass list! He was consequently a 'Student in Music,' and free to sit for the 1st Mus. B. the day following. After considering the matter, he had decided that a 'bad shot' would be worse than 'no shot,' and concluded to wait six months before attempting the next test.

Zachau, moreover, although a good master, had allowed John to do his harmony and counterpoint exercises without using the old clefs, and John feared to sit for the examination, conscious of this weakness, knowing that it is compulsory everywhere nowadays that the 'proper' clefs be used.

It took John, on his return home, a few days to get over the excitement of his recent success. He then sought out a well-known Mus. D. Oxon., and communicated with him, with the result that he had lessons by correspondence in preparation for the 1st Mus. B. He soon got into harness, and persevered well with his Harmony, Counterpoint (this time with 'C' clefs), Form, Composition, and Instrumentation.

The six months over, he again visited Durham, and returned after a short absence. He then anxiously awaited a letter from the authorities. In the meantime, he busied himself with his organ and pianoforte

practice, playing on me, at every opportunity he had, music of the severely classical kind, as well as from full scores. The latter I found the most trying, for this work was necessarily slow, and, at first, somewhat chaotic, but his solo playing had much improved, and he was able to let me speak—people said 'show me off'—to some advantage, although, of course, not so well as Flügelbrecher could have done.

It was shortly after dinner one evening that the post brought a letter. In it was enclosed a Testamur, announcing John's success at the musical examination! Particulars were added about the 'Exercise,' and the 'Final.'

John and all his family were truly delighted with the good news! Even his father seemed at last to think well of his studies, and gave his son words of encouragement, which stimulated the young man more than anything else could have done to further efforts. For the time being, John ceased his correspondence lessons, but not his practice, and set about selecting the words for his 'Exercise.' His first impulse was to take them from the Psalms; but, knowing these to be largely drawn upon for the purpose of such works, he ultimately decided on a translation of an old Latin hymn. The hymn pleased him much, and he was unhampered with metrical words.

It was laid down that the Exercise should be a composition of four movements—containing a five-part chorus, with a short introductory symphony; an unaccompanied quartet; a solo; a five-part choral introduction and fugue, with an accompaniment for a string band. This being John's first serious essay in actual composition, he thought he should devote at least a year to it, so he proceeded, by way of practice, to write

various specimens before launching forth on the real exercise.

The necessity of economising his energies, and of method, now became evident to him. For this reason, he drew up a plan of daily study, and, as far as possible, carried it out. He rose at 5.30 every morning, and worked away at Macfarren, Gross, or Richter until 7. From 7 until 8 he practised on me. Breakfast followed, and at 9 o'clock he was at his bank, for he could not afford to cut himself adrift from it.

By 6.30 p.m. he had finished his day's duties, and, after a hurried dinner, he would play on me for a while, sonatas, etc., by Mozart, Beethoven, or Weber, and one or more of Bach's "48." Three hours during the week were spent on choir training and in taking part in an orchestral class. By this arrangement he was able to give nearly two hours daily to the 'Exercise.' In spite of many interruptions, through his power of self-denial and indomitable will, John kept to his programme of studies fairly well, with the result that his musical knowledge developed rapidly.

He finished his 'Exercise' at last, and posted it to the Registrar, enclosing the stated fee.

Two months passed. Then came a sorrowful day. The 'Exercise' was returned with an intimation that it had "not satisfied the examiners." John's disappointment was keen, but failure did him good. Rather than lose heart, he determined more than ever to win. He began a fresh exercise, again taking for his words the translation of a Latin hymn.

He now seemed—thanks to experience already gained—better able to grapple with the difficulties of composition, and eventually produced a work of which he really felt proud. This, as before, he sent to the

Registrar, not forgetting the accustomed fee. His rejected exercise, by this time, seemed so puerile and full of errors that he destroyed it in disgust. He now "possessed himself in patience" until informed that the work was not only 'accepted' but 'highly commended.'

John's temperament was one that went up and down like the mercury in a thermometer. His spirits were as high at this good news as they had before been depressed, and they reached maximum point when he remembered that, the next step being successful, he would have won his longed-for degree.

But now to sordid matters. By this time, besides the £40 paid for me, £30 had been spent in books, tuition by correspondence, and examination fees. John, although he did not intend to exceed his means, resumed his postal lessons, and prepared for his 'Final.' With this object, he devoted himself to Harmony, Counterpoint, Canon, Fugue, Form, etc., as well as the analysis of the two "Full scores" (an oratorio and a symphony) announced for the *Viva voce* part of the examination, playing only on Me to exercise himself in reading from orchestral scores. While he was doing this, I became aware that I was giving him more trouble. His worried looks had returned. He declared to his friends that I buzzed, rattled, shook, jarred, jingled, and that I was afflicted with every ill it was possible for a piano to possess. In short, he suggested that I had a chronic disease, for no expert appeared able to cure me. I attributed this state of things to my own anxiety concerning him and his work, and hoped that my nerves would improve later on. John, notwithstanding my condition, worked on determinedly. He stinted himself, and sacrificed everything to his

music. His mother, noticing his frequent headaches, and fearful lest his health should break down, urged him to take rest, but John would not desist from his studies.

The day at length arrived when he visited Durham for the third time. By his letters, it was evident that he found the ordeal a trying one. He wrote that he had returned to his lodgings conscious of having done 'fairly well,' but afraid that his nervousness had militated against him.

Another letter said that after enduring one more period of suspense, he had repaired to Palace Green on the morning after his last examination. To his surprise and joy his name *headed the list*!

John immediately telegraphed home this good news —so we got the telegram before the letter—and a request for his dress suit for the ceremony of graduation on the morrow; university etiquette demanding the assumption of the 'white tie and swallow-tail' by recipients of degrees. Having accomplished so much, he now—so his letter ran—"breathed the air of glorious freedom, and strolled around as if the world belonged to him and he were on enchanted ground."

He attended morning service at the Cathedral, and, at its close, obtained access to the organ—one of Willis' masterpieces.

The verger's exhaustive, technical and historical explanation had much delighted him on a previous occasion; so, after writing his name in the visitors' book and placing a thank offering in the box, he renewed acquaintance with the most interesting nooks of the venerable pile.

John next called on the 'Varsity tailors about his robes for the morrow's function. As the black silk

gown cost six guineas to buy, he decided to be economical and hire.

Saturday morning's post brought his dress suit, and oh! such a budget of letters of congratulations on his success. The weather was very fine, and the city full of life, as is the rule on degree days.

At noon, Convocation was opened. The very Rev. the Warden presided. He was supported by the Proctors, all duly robed and capped. A number of medical degrees were first conferred, the musical distinctions coming later—music being the Cinderella of the faculties. The names being read out by the Warden, the candidates were severally called up, and presented by the Durham Professor of Music, as students in music who had qualified for admission to the Bachelor's degree. As the Warden raised his cap, the medical favoured the musical graduates with a 'stentorian' chorus of 'Glory, Hallelujah!'

It was all over.

The 2 o'clock train to the south that afternoon carried a jubilant party, of which John was no insignificant member. On his return home a welcome reception awaited him. He was the 'hero of the hour.' A descriptive account of his doings which he related to his family circle proved most interesting to them.

From all sides he received congratulations, and on being asked by the vicar to give an organ recital, he readily consented. On that special occasion the church was crowded to excess. To the satisfaction of all present, John performed a programme consisting exclusively of English organ music. At the conclusion the vicar eulogised John, gave a supper in his honour, presented him with a congratulatory address, and, finally, asked his acceptance of the clock mentioned as adorn-

ing the chimney-piece at the opening of this chapter It bore a silver plate, inscribed :—

Presented to
JOHN WAELRANT LINDSAY, Esq.,
Mus. Bac. Dunelm,
as a token of regard and appreciation of his
industry and musical ability,
from
THE VICAR AND PARISHIONERS
of
St. Gregory's, Southburn,
1899.

It is needless to say how proud John's parents were of this recognition of their son's abilities.

Herr Flügelbrecher, Gertrude Lindsay's fiancé, who had come over from Germany expressly for this memorable gathering, half wished that he were a graduate, although he contended—rather jealously, I thought—that a knowledge of the science of music could not alone make a musician. With that statement John entirely agreed, and, moreover, added that all the subjects, be they scientific or otherwise, included in the examinations through which he had gone, were only those which every educated musician ought to know.

In the midst of all his happiness, I was delighted to find that John did not forget me. He played much on me. The dear fellow attributed to me the *raison d'être* of his first musical enthusiasm.

My sympathetic buzzings and jarrings—strange to say—had disappeared, proving that well-made pianos possess nerves like human beings, for it was only nervousness on my part, with regard to John and his work, which had made me so noisy. My troubles,

however, were not yet entirely over, for during John's absence in Durham mice had been eating my 'felts.' You may be sure that John's solicitude for me did not let this damage remain long unrepaired.

The curate's son's grand doings at Durham having been a 'nine days' wonder' in the village, they were duly forgotten. As a change after his theoretical studies, John now took a bout at pianoforte and organ practice. An organist and choirmaster being wanted for a church not far distant from his home, John made application. The affairs at the church in question being conducted by a church council consisting of thirty-six ladies and gentlemen, a considerable time elapsed before that body vouchsafed a reply.

John was eventually selected with four others, out of seventy applicants (who had forwarded their testimonials) to compete, and the day chosen for the trial was the Saturday of the following week; the umpire being Professor Knowall.

At the hour arranged, the candidates appeared, being first scrutinised by the members of the church council, although the candidates were only to be known to the umpire by numbers. John drew No. 3.

The first two acquitted themselves well. John's playing, also, was most scholarly. The remaining two musicians having done their part, after some lengthy consideration by Dr. Knowall, for three of the candidates were very good indeed, Dr Knowall gave a further test, *viva voce.* Here the studies needed for John's degree served him in good stead, and he soon showed a deeper knowledge of his profession than the other candidates. It was, therefore, unanimously resolved that he be appointed to the vacant post.

Thus did John's long period of hard and diligent

work bring forth good fruit. In the first place, by gaining his degree, of which he was justly proud, he had been impelled to improve his general as well as his musical knowledge; and, secondly, by winning an appointment, which enabled him to give up the Bank, his degree had launched him successfully in a profession to which he could thenceforth devote himself heart and soul.

One day John Lindsay was playing on me a Liszt Rhapsody. "My dear John," said the Rev. Harvey Lindsay, entering the room, and placing his hands affectionately on his son's shoulders, "I am not musical, therefore you must forgive my former opposition to your choice of a profession."

"Oh, sir!" cried John, "it is you who should forgive my opposition to your wishes. But I felt life, for me, would be a failure in any other calling."

"No, no, John, I was to blame. You have done the right thing, my boy," said the clergyman, deprecating himself. "In my old-fashioned way, I formerly classed all musicians as 'rogues and vagabonds'; but I cannot do so now. Your winning that Mus. B. degree at Durham has reconciled me."

John smiled. "A degree cannot make a musician," he said, "but it is given as a 'hall mark of scholarship,' and is therefore of unquestionable value."

"Undoubtedly, my boy, undoubtedly," rejoined the Rev. Harvey Lindsay. "It makes a respectable calling of music, remember that, a *respectable* calling."

As his father left the room, John went on playing, regarding me with affection, whilst I throbbed with unspeakable pride under the clever fingers of the dear fellow; and just then the presentation clock struck twelve. I am sure that both of us thought that even a clock can strike musically.

XII

GERTRUDE'S GREAT-GRANDMAMMA

BY JEANNE SMALT
(Rotterdam)

THE last chapter was about a clock, this one will be about a picture.

People who regard musical instruments as mere machines for the interpretation of the writings of musical composers make a great mistake, for we musical instruments are quite able to talk to each other, and we do so in harmonical sounds, so high that no human ear can perceive them. Insects sometimes can; but the conversation of house-flies and gnats is not interesting.

I had rather a dull life in John's studio to which he moved after getting his organ appointment, as I had no very nice companions to talk to, since poor Angus Mackay's violin and I had parted company; so at least I thought; but I perceived later on that I was wrong, and that a certain old harpsichord, which had belonged to old Giovanni Zachau and stood beside me, was a perfect gold mine of musical interest.

Meanwhile, the only time I really enjoyed myself was when my master came into his studio to play on me, and I was able to give expression, in sound, to his thoughts.

Opposite me an old oil painting was hanging, which did not particularly interest me as I had become tired of staring at it day after day. Quite close by me stood the ancient shabby looking harpsichord which I thought had lost its voice entirely, because it had never spoken a word to me.

I had often tried to start a conversation, but had met with no success, as the harpsichord had always listened and looked thoughtful, but remained mute.

The first time it spoke was one day when my master came in with several furniture dealers, who were asked to bid for my neighbour. Only two out of twelve men would make an offer for the harpsichord, and John accepted the highest offer of £4. The men were far more interested in the oil painting.

One of them had taken a wet sponge and drawn it across the face of the picture, revealing some very beautiful colour, and now they were in a serious dispute as to its authenticity.

"It is a Breughel," declared one of them. A second maintained it was a "Van Dyck," the third said: "Pooh! a 'Van Dyck'? You know nothing about pictures; *that* a 'Van Dyck'? I tell you it is a 'Both.'"

The others cried out that the picture was a "Snyders," "Hobbima," "Cuyp," "Rembrandt."

As no two of them agreed, they all talked loudly and became so excited that one of them accidentally pushed the old harpsichord.

Then through the hubbub, I could distinctly hear a weak but very high-pitched vibration close to me saying: "That's better, we can talk to you now by heart throbs. The pack of dunces! Why not call the picture a Velasquez at once?"

To my great astonishment, the throbbing voice which

I felt, came from the old harpsichord touching my case.

As soon as my spine—I mean my bridge—had recovered from the shock, which it got by feeling the harpsichord's voice, I asked: "Do *you* know who painted that portrait?"

"We should think we did," the harpsichord answered, "that oil painting is a genuine Peter Paul Rubens, and we could tell you a lot more."

I said I should like very much to hear more, if it did not tire my neighbour.

"No! it will not tire us," came the reply, "but you must listen attentively for we cannot speak loudly, as we are old and our voice is nothing but a feeble whisper, because our sound board is cracked, our jacks are choked with dust, our strings are missing, and we are much out of order."

I promised to listen very attentively, and the story the harpsichord told me, must find a place here, for it intimately concerns the story of my life.

"We were born at Antwerp," the harpsichord began, "in the year 1589, just after the Spanish 'Invincible Armada,' as the Spaniards called their fleet of 132 ships, had been repulsed by the English Admiral, Lord Howard.

"It was then evident that the power of Spain had been overrated, and so all those countries which were resisting Spain, plucked up their courage. The war went on in the Netherlands and in France, and the protestant Netherlands slowly made good their revolt against Philip II.

"We were made by the famous Hans Ruckers the elder, as you can see by the golden monogram 'H.R.' in our soundhole, and we contained improvements

which resulted in a nice silvery tone, and as we have two keyboards, with white sharps and black naturals, we were called a '*Double* Ruckers!'

"Our appearance was rendered very dainty by wonderful paintings (of ships and naval battles) on our top and sides, by members of the St. Luke's Guild of Facteurs de Claveçins d'Anvers. Ha! those paintings were wickedly stripped off us fifty years afterwards and sold.

"Well, while the students were working on us, the great Rubens often came round to criticise their progress.

"And, one day, when Rubens was at the *Atelier* of Hans Ruckers the elder, it happened that the dear little daughter of Huibert Waelrant, the Cathedral organist, came in with a message from her good father, bidding Hans to tune the organ.

"Marie, that was the name of the little girl, was very, very pretty. She had a sweet little slender figure, pretty soft blue eyes, very fair curly hair and a rosy complexion. Rubens was so much struck by her fresh healthy beauty, that he insisted on painting her in her national dress; and that picture, over there, was the result. Look at it! See her quaint head-dress: a golden casque or helmet, covered with a cap of lace or tulle that went over Marie's head entirely, which was a pity, for she had such a well shaped little head and such luxuriant hair. Frontlets and coils, in the form of a corkscrew of thin strips of gold, are, you see, fastened at the headband and were meant to adorn Marie's forehead.

"That head-dress belonged to the national costume, and we are told that, to this day, it is still worn by some Dutch peasant women.

"Rubens, though, was not the only person who thought Marie beautiful.

"Hans Ruckers the elder, my maker, had four sons—Frans, Hans the younger, Andries and Anthon, who all became clever harpsichord constructors. Hans the younger was a fine lad, and always went with his father to tune the organ in the Virgin's Chapel of Antwerp Cathedral.

"Hans the younger not only shared the same idea with Rubens as to Marie's beauty, but he fell madly and hopelessly in love with the pretty Marietje, and I knew that Marie loved Hans, because, as she was very musical and sang divinely, she often, before I was sold, used me for accompanying her love songs. One tune which I particularly remember because it had such a charming melody and was so well within the range of her voice, was the following old Dutch song:

'Ghequetst ben ick van binnen,
Deur wónt miyn hért so seér,
Van úwer ganscher minnen,
Ghequétst so lánc so meér.
Waer ick my wénd, waer ick my kéer.
Ick en cán gherústen dágh, noch náchte,
Waer ick my wénd, waer ick my kéer,
Ghe sýt alleén in mýn ghedachte.'

"In English, sang the old harpsichord sweetly, it goes:

'My inmost soul is wounded,
And so my heart is sad,
Craving thy love, I suffer,
My thoughts no more are glad.
Where'er I look, where'er I stray,
Unrest my being seems to sway,
Where'er I look, where'er I stray,
My thoughts are with thee, dear, all day.'

"Beautiful!" I cried. But the harpsichord continued, as if resenting the interruption: 'Listen! Hans' father, although a clever harpsichord maker, was sordid. He wished his son to marry a rich butcher's daughter, and not a portionless girl.

"Poor Marietje, who had no money at all, and had no luck because she was born on Black Wednesday, felt very sad and hopeless. All she could do was to pray fervently to the Virgin to help her.

"Little did she think that her prayer would be answered so soon.

"Now; after we had been finished, we had been sold to the great Admiral Maarten Harpertszoon Tromp, and the Admiral, after his victory near Duins off the coast of England in 1639 (where the powerful Spanish fleet, under d'Oquendo was repulsed by Tromp), had a special Te Deum sung, at great expense, at the Cathedral in Antwerp.

"On that occasion Marie was present, praying devoutly for help, and help came in this way.

"The Admiral, who was very musical, was so delighted with Waelrant's organ playing that he asked the musician to his house, and requested him to accept us, the *chef d'œuvre* of Ruckers, as a present, and thus we became the property, first of a great Admiral, and next of a great musician. And then, through us, Marietje's prayer was heard. Listen to the way it happened."

"I am listening," I said hastily, eager not to lose a word.

"That night, on opening our top," said the harpsichord, "Waelrant discovered a bag of Spanish gold within us!

"'Holy Virgin, I thank thee! This is an answer to my prayer!' Marietje cried.

"'No, it is the Admiral's property,' said her father. 'This must be given back to him.'

"So they went to Tromp, but the Admiral laughed. He declared, with an oath which frightened Marie, that he knew nothing about the gold.

"'It will make a dowry for this pretty child,' he said, carelessly, and so it did.

"Marietje, soon after this happened, was married to young Hans Ruckers, whose father could no longer make any objection; and that beautiful oil painting, Marie's portrait, was Rubens' present to the bride.

"So Gertrude Lindsay is the great-great-great-great-grand-daughter of pretty Marie; and we are sure John would not have sold us for a few pounds on behalf of his master, Zachau's executors, if he knew how we had belonged also to Handel, who gave us to Zachau's grandfather.

"From what we have told you, you will see that John has Dutch blood in his veins. You can therefore understand the reason of his pluck and his dogged perseverance in winning his Mus. Bac. degree.

"You can see, moreover, that our life has been a very interesting one, and that we know still better what love is than you, for we have not only been loved by kings, queens, and princes, but loved also by that pretty Dutch girl Marie, the prettiest love a double lover ever had."

"I should not have thought your life had been so full of interest," I said.

"Oh! we could tell much which would thrill you, the harpischord quavered. "For example, we were in Florence in 1710, and *saw Cristofori invent the piano*!'

"Oh, do tell me about it"! I cried. But at this moment my neighbour was rudely hurried away by a

couple of men, and I could hear the feeble silvery voice of that proud old double harpischord, like a tiny carillon, cry out:

"Goodbye, dear. We consider you *much better* than any piano Cristofori made, or even imagined."

"Thank you!" I replied, as I positively purred with pride.

XIII

AN OLD FOLK-SONG

BY F. CUNNINGHAM WOODS
M.A., Mus. Bac. (Oxon.)

"THE tunes will die with her," remarked John Lindsay, taking his hands off my keyboard, "if I cannot coax them out of old Biddy. With persuasion, perhaps, even the mummy of a woman may manage to yield up at least one of the old songs she knew as a girl. That would be a triumph for me!"

Biddy Bramber looked as genuine a centenarian as anyone I have seen, and John knew from his own experience and from the traditions of the countryside, that the ancient creature had in her brain a large store of otherwise forgotten folk-songs. The villagers always stoutly maintained that Biddy dabbled in various dark arts, and, had the custom of trying a witch at a court of law still been in vogue, they would have arraigned her for her dealings with the Evil One; of which dealings they knew little, but talked much. After serving in the Lindsay family for many years, Biddy was ending her days in a quiet, ivy-grown almshouse which stood a little way back from the high road.

I am not likely to forget the curious effect her fumblings over my keys produced upon me one day when, calling to see "Master John," the old wench raised

my lid and feebly tinkled an accompaniment, as if she had formerly been able to play on the harpsichord, whilst crooning snatches of songs which were unintelligible to me.

One song began 'Oh, my rusty old knife is the joy of my life,' but the 'knife' and the 'joy' and the 'life' ended incoherently.

My keys were moist when she finished—I fancy with her tears.

John now rose from my keyboard as Biddy was announced and entered.

The contrast between her and the modern servant who showed her in was marked. Biddy looked doubly aged and bent beside the up-to-date servant, who was more than smart, for she kept her bicycle and spent most of her quarter's earnings on sundry much befeathered hats in which she was photographed.

"I am glad that you were well enough to come," said John, as he helped the old dame to an arm chair near me.

"I be' gettin' old, Master John, I be gettin' old," whined the beldame, "and my breathin's too bad for me to sing—besides, my memory's not so good as it wur, and the rheumatiz seems no better, though I do keep a raw tater in my pocket."

"Never mind, Biddy," replied John, "I want you to hum, or sing, a few notes of the old songs you knew when you were a girl. If you can remember all the words so much the better," he added encouragingly.

"Ah, my memory's bad! I told my daughter Jane, what married the sojer—you wouldn't remember my Jane now, Master John. No, she died forty year ago come next Michaelmas, and that was before your time. Deary me, how time do fly!"

John, anxious to stop this rambling, suddenly struck a chord of the seventh in the middle of her sentence, and in the middle of my compass. He might have had the artistic decency to resolve the chord, although that is contrary to fashion nowadays in some music; even musicians can be thoughtless.

"No, Biddy," he said politely, "I never saw your daughter. You will, I know, try to sing to please me. Sing anything. Any little snatches of tunes you heard long ago."

"Well, Master John, there be one tune I *do* know," exclaimed Biddy, brightening up.

John, delighted, got pencil and note-book ready, so as to miss none of the long-forgotten melody about to be revealed. The old woman, to him, was more interesting now, and John was on the tiptoe of expectation. Then, after a preliminary munching of her nutcracker chin, she began. It sounded new to me, but John recognised the melody at once, when Biddy cackled "Umph! Ta-ra-ra-Boom-de-ay," accompanying the 'boom' with a stamp of her feet.

Never had I heard John swear before—not that I object to profanity so much, mark you; but it did shock me to be thumped without due warning. If he were put out, why did he not thump Biddy instead of venting his foolish spleen on my top?

Biddy came to a sudden halt and was taken with a fit of coughing; the excitement was too much for her. John bit his lip, and then said, as quietly as he could: "I want an old tune, Biddy, a really old one. Take your memory back to the time when you danced on the village green, and sang at the Harvest Home."

Biddy, thus instructed, muttered to herself inaudibly.

"Well, Biddy," John added presently, "are you going to sing?"

"Ah, Master John," quavered the old crone, "your poor mother! I do remember dancing at the weddin' when my good man got right proper drunk. Mother Hazel begged at the back door on the weddin' morn. We women saw her, and ran for our lives. She was the Wednesday witch with the evil eye, and after that, Clara, my sister, found my good man drowned in the mill-dyke. It gave her a turn, and scared me nigh to death. Now, your grandmother, Master John, was always sort of fond o' me, for I was handy and could make good pasties and pies. It was in the summer of ——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted John, "I can hear about my ancestors later on. Will you sing?"

Biddy's thoughts, however, were far away. She wanted to talk about love potions and charms, lucky stars and Gaffer Bramber, whilst John, sprawling over my keyboard, crushed down with his right arm some two octaves of my white and black notes till their levers began to wonder what was the matter. Thinking it would be best to let Biddy have her 'say,' John remained silent. This was wise, for the old woman presently began a song with a refrain, the words of which were not quite clear beyond a reference to a 'girl child,' to a certain 'Black Wednesday,' and an exhortation to 'never marry.'

John jotted down what he could on his music-paper very quickly, trusting to luck to correct properly afterwards, and, as he had his foot on my damper pedal, my strings vibrated slightly in sympathy as Biddy's voice gained in strength. The tonality of the song sounded strange to me, and the style unfamiliar. I

had heard John speak vaguely of 'old modes,' and 'irregular sentences.' Sometimes he alluded to Breton melodies, in which $\frac{9}{4}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ times alternated, as the singer thought fit, or as the words suggested; but I always failed to understand what was meant. It is a pity folk do not use more simple terms! Nowadays I notice that 'boarders' are known as 'paying guests,' water-carts become 'hydrostatic vans,' and even a coffin is termed a 'funereal casket.'

When Biddy had finished her crooning, John gave her a bright half-crown and some refreshment before she hobbled off home.

Then I had leisure to think over Biddy's visit until Gertrude entered and settled down comfortably in an easy chair, after dinner, to read *Great Expectations*, until John joined her.

"Biddy was a good honest girl, was she?" said Gertrude, referring to one of Dickens's characters. "I don't believe there ever was a 'good' or an 'honest' Biddy." Just then the maid brought in a letter.

"It is from Heinrich!" cried Gertrude, as the door was shut, and she lost no time in devouring its contents.

"Tell your sister," Flügelbrecher wrote in German, "that I have not forgotten my promise to help both her and you, but I can only send a very small remittance this month, dearest, as things are very bad with me."

"Poor dear Heinrich!" said Gertrude, kissing his letter, "we must not be a burden on him. I can accompany, and must turn that gift to account."

Then John came in and commenced strumming on me, endeavouring to fit an accompaniment to the quaint forgotten song Biddy had reproduced to the best of her ability. John's playing of the tune in the key of C

annoyed me, as I distinctly remembered Biddy's attempt was in D.

Gertrude, who was put out because John would not listen to her lover's letter, had taken up her book again and said, "John, if you want to play, play. Don't keep on thumbing out a lot of disconnected chords. For goodness sake, play something."

John, however, was too absorbed either to answer or to break off the series of experimental harmonies on which he was busy. At last, having settled the harmonies more to his own taste—not to mine, as they bothered me, and made me resent being a partner in his musical misdoings by reproducing them—he began trying over the words together with the tune and its refrain, which latter ran after this fashion :—

"For a girl-child, if born
On Black Wednesday in the morn,
Must have sorrow all her life,
And shall ne'er become a wife.
Yet a husband she may find
If the lover, good and kind,
Doth believe her every word,
And accept——"

A sound of a heavy fall caused John to stop short in the song. I had noticed Gertrude becoming more and more uneasy as the song proceeded, until, leaving her seat, she approached me, put her hand to her heart, and fell forward in a dead faint.

John's first intimation of Gertrude's seizure was when he saw his sister lying motionless at his feet.

Having hastily summoned help, he applied restoratives, and was, before long, thankful to notice her recovering from the fainting fit which was as sudden as unexpected.

Gertrude opened her eyes wearily and looked at John.

"Lie still," he said softly; "you are better, dear, now. You shall talk soon, but not yet."

Gertrude obeyed, but presently whispered, as she again opened her eyes, "John, where have I heard that song before?"

"I cannot say," replied John, still bathing her forehead with Eau de Cologne. "It is strange even to me. Did my playing upset you?"

Gertrude sighed, and said faintly, "The song has come to me in snatches. I cannot remember hearing it so completely as you have given it. Where did you hear it?"

"Biddy Bramber sang it to me this afternoon when I asked her for any old song which lingered in her memory," said John, quite at a loss to know how Gertrude could be overcome by the music.

At this, Gertrude slowly raised herself, and leant heavily against me. I could feel her trembling; she was unusually nervous and excited.

"Biddy Bramber's song?" she said, half aloud, "the old witch, wicked old Biddy Bramber? She had that uncanny song put into her head by no earthly agency. Oh, John, I believe she learnt that song from some supernatural source!"

Here Gertrude leant forward over my top and sobbed hysterically.

"Come, come, don't cry over a stupid song," said John, soothingly, "an old folk-song, Gertrude. Aunt Ruckers probably sang it years ago."

"Aunt Ruckers," said Gertrude, disdainfully, standing up; "Aunt Ruckers could not have sung that song. She never sang a note in her life! Besides, if she had

been a singer, do you think she would have sung that? Why, she herself was born on Black Wednesday!" Gertrude here crossed over to the fireplace and leant against the chimney-piece. "This is a dreadful day for me," she said.

As John did not know what to answer, there was an embarrassing silence for several minutes. Then Gertrude suddenly turned round, and, facing her brother, said slowly, "Yes, Aunt Ruckers never married."

"Surely, you do not think that the verses have an unholy influence?" retorted John. "You cannot think that the singing of certain verses about a girl being born on a Wednesday can act as a spell over anyone born on that day, or on any other day, for that matter?"

Gertrude made no reply, but went to a shelf on which the family Bible rested, and took it down. After placing the big book upon me, she opened it, apprehensively.

Gertrude's manner puzzled John. The sudden swooning of his sister, her wrath against harmless old Biddy, her fixed idea that the poor crone intended to mar her life—due, no doubt, to the gossip of a nurse when Gertrude was a child—astonished John, and revealed his sister in a new and unaccountable light.

He watched her without comment as she, with trembling fingers, turned over the pages of the Bible till she came to the family register of births, deaths, and marriages. "John," she said, in startled accents, "I feared it. I was born on the last Wednesday in November—'Black Wednesday.'"

This was too much for the matter-of-fact John. He laughed outright, and paced the room, with his hands deep in his pockets.

"Bosh!" he exclaimed at length; "old Biddy sang

me a really good song. I liked it and noted it down quickly, but I believe correctly. It is the best I have done. Don't say that you are superstitious. No, no, Gertrude, my sister is too sensible. I cannot think you sincere if you pretend to believe in witchcraft!" and he laughed again.

"Believe me, or not, as you please," replied Gertrude, solemnly, still gazing at the fatal entry in the family Bible.

John stopped short on the hearth-rug, and began kicking the coals in the grate. Why do men sometimes do that? There was a poker handy. He might have used it. Men are odd things!

"My dear Gertrude, you are not yourself," said John, snappishly. "You are mooning, or maybe you are upset by something of which I know nothing. Take a tonic. Go to-morrow for a long walk. If you need a change of scene and air you shall have it, although, you know, our exchequer is low. You are out of sorts, my good girl. That's all."

With that he left the room, evidently annoyed; he had been so elated after successfully extracting Biddy's song, that he had hoped for applause instead of these silly forebodings. So he closed the door none too softly. Gertrude, sobbing to herself, looked at me reproachfully, as if I were to blame. Slowly shutting the Bible, she said, with a sigh: "Ah me! I wish that what John says were all! I wish that were all! Trouble is coming; I know it."

XIV

TEACHING THE CHILDREN

BY MRS. JOSEPH L. ROECKEL
(Clifton, Bristol)

EVERY woman has her turn of trouble. Gertrude's turn seemed now to have come in full force. She realised, however, that troubles, like babies, grow larger by nursing, and that the best way of softening troubles is to solace and look after those who cannot help themselves.

She determined to teach the twins their notes. Although herself a good scholar, she was aware that every good scholar is not a good teacher. To teach children it is necessary to study them, and, unless the pupil is fond of the teacher, little progress can be made.

The children were now five years of age, which might be considered early for beginning musical studies, although Mozart, Crotch, the Wesleys, and others, commenced when much younger. Owing to both their parents having been musical, it might be expected that both Romeo and Juliet had inherited a natural aptitude for the art.

Had this been an ordinary story instead of the autobiography of an extraordinary pianoforte, the reader would, long ago, have come to the conclusion that the twins were introduced in this book merely to

add interest to my last chapter, wherein I ought to be given, in my old age, to the orphanage on behalf of which this volume is written.

I need not apologise for hinting at these things, because the intelligent reader has, I am sure, been putting two and two together, and saying, "I know what the end will be. These children of poor Angus Mackay, the clever violinist, will be left desolate, but they will both find a happy home in the orphanage."

Well, well, we shall see. Personally I should not care to have to draw a pathetic and harrowing picture of juvenile destitution. Why? Because it could not be altogether relieved by the orphanage in question. At the time of writing, the reader may as well note, that institution can only provide for girls. It has no accommodation yet for little boys. Indeed, it is precisely with the hope that enough money may be raised, by the profits on this book, to build and maintain a wing for boy-orphans, that these pages are being penned.

My present amanuensis, therefore, is thankful that she has not to describe how poor little Romeo might possibly have been left out in the cold, especially as he was not attentive or painstaking with his lessons. Unfortunately for the musical profession, there are many such poor little Romeos.

It was with a feeling that a knowledge of music—which might prove, later on, of value—could not be instilled too soon into the minds of the twins, that Gertrude Lindsay now took her nephew and niece in hand, and taught them their notes at my keyboard.

Some parents think that any old piano is good enough to teach children upon in the nursery. That is a mistake. The better the instrument, the more will

the pupil be interested. I say it was a fortunate thing that the twins had such a beautiful piano as myself to practise upon.

Of the two I preferred the little girl, because Romeo's fingers were nearly always dirty, and one day they were quite jammy. The young monkey, also, was mischievous, and, on one occasion, when his aunt's back was turned, he emptied a handful of bird-seed into my inside. Fortunately, it did not go into my action.

Romeo, being less attentive than his sister, made less progress. Juliet, on the other hand, was very serious and determined to learn "moosic, to help mummy."

In teaching these mites, Gertrude derived infinite help from a certain *Modern Pianoforte Method*, the first object of which was to be 'absolutely progressive,' and the second to be 'abreast of the time.' Each and every detail of the elements of music were, therefore, successively explained and illustrated, and a short treatise on harmony, together with various musical and pictorial illustrations, were added, so as to render the method thoroughly up to date.

Although Gertrude had long studied the art of pianoforte playing, she soon found that in teaching by this method, she was herself being taught, and that every repetition of old work revealed in a new light added a fresh link to her chain of musical thought.

Nevertheless, to repeat one thing continually is wearisome to the hearer, although essential to the learner. Indeed, in the education of children, while the mind is pliant and the age is flexible, repetition is the mother of education. Like the fresco-painter, the teacher lays colours on the wet plaster which fade away and must be renewed until at last they remain bright.

Gertrude, after having given both children a lesson, had retired to her room. She had a headache. Romeo had gone off to play marbles, but Juliet, who wanted to learn, was trying to practise. My deep touch made the tiny fingers of the little girl very, very tired. But the child practised on. She had the room to herself, and it was getting dark. Ever and anon she stopped to repeat aloud a lesson she had learnt parrot fashion.

"One semibreve"—chanted the little voice—"makes two minnies, or four totchets, or eight quavies, or sixteen semiquavies, or tirty-two demi-semiquavies."

The child repeated this without having the slightest idea of the meaning.

I do not wish to boast, but it may interest the public to know how a really good piano, such as myself, is able to help on the progress of a little child.

As her fingers stumbled over my keys, I could see the eyes of the little girl gazing at my notes with more and more wonder. She might well gaze. To her, my keys seemed magnified. I was about to help her. On the surface of my naturals, a number of little black and white fairy soldiers appeared. Some moved slowly, others quickly, and others quicker still; and, as they trod on my keys, so did the notes sound.

"What pretty soldiers oo are!" cried Juliet, clapping her hands. "Who are oo?"

A great fat fairy soldier, looking like Humpty-dumpty on crutches, came to the front. He said, "My name is Breve, General Breve, don't-yer-know, but I'm on the retired list. Speak to the Colonel."

At this, the biggest and slowest moving of the other fairy soldiers stepped lazily to the front, and introduced himself.

"I am Colonel Semibreve," he said; "my Majors are two Minims."

Two light-headed officers with long tail coats stalked forward and saluted.

"Each Major," continued Colonel Semibreve, "has —haw!—two Captains under him."

Here four Crotchets, dressed in black, stepped briskly to the front.

"And each Captain is responsible for two Lieutenant Quavers."

Here eight Quavers, carrying long lances with single pennons, advanced quickly.

"Next, each Lieutenant Quaver is responsible for two Sergeant Semiquavers."

Here sixteen Semiquavers, carrying lances with double pennons, reported themselves smartly.

"Further," went on the officer in charge, "each Sergeant Semiquaver has under him two Demi-semiquavers."

Here thirty-two Privates, each bearing a lance with three pennons, hurried forward and saluted.

Singing all the time, the fairy soldiers then manœuvred, the celerity of their movements being regulated according to their rank, so that, whilst Colonel Semibreve moved very slowly and pompously on my bass notes, the privates ran along down my treble as quickly as they possibly could.

Juliet was delighted, "I know how much oo notes is werf now!" she cried.

"All right," said the Colonel. "My men have played your piece. You have heard how it ought to go. We will now get along with the Staff Drill. Little girls must learn by sight as well as by ear."

Immediately, two sets of telegraph wires were rigged

up across my music desk, each set having five wires. These wires represented the lines of the great staff. A curly snake hooked up to the top staff represented the treble clef, and a big C, upside down, stood for the bass.

The fairy-soldiers then grouped themselves on the wires, the privates being squeezed together and the Colonel having plenty of room. They represented a bar of the music the little girl had been trying to play.

"Now play," said the Colonel. Juliet obeyed, and directly she began, the wires were drawn away to the right, and directly each bar had passed, the fairy-soldiers rearranged themselves in the bar which was to come.

If Juliet did not play correctly, the bar stood still; and that is how she soon began to read at sight.

The reader may say that this was an hallucination. Juliet, however, in her imagination saw these and many other sights, which I showed her, explaining Rests, Intervals, Accidentals, Common chords, Inversions, and so forth, as her lessons progressed.

The best proof that she saw, was that she understood the meaning of everything in a way which astonished her teacher.

"She is wonderfully talented!" everybody said.

Little did they know that it was I who put so many pleasant and useful thoughts into that innocent little brain.

If Romeo had behaved himself, and not played tricks, I should have helped him just as I did his sister; so children, if they wish to get on, *must* pay attention, and be good when they practise the piano.

XV

"THE CHARITY CONCERT"

BY MURIEL HANDLEY

THE immediate result of John Lindsay's musical success was, that he was frequently importuned to give his services at "at homes" and charities in the neighbourhood of Southburn. We know, however, that it was necessary for him to economise in every possible way. His sisters needed his help, and he rightly considered that, if even a common labourer is worthy of his hire, a skilled musician deserves payment in return for the pleasure which his playing gives, not to speak of the enormous outlay of time and money which is necessary before proficiency can be reached. The public listens to its favourites, and, when it thinks at all, thinks that theirs is an easy way to make a living. Seldom do people realise, when hearing a popular artist, how much labour has had to be gone through, what lonely hours of drudgery and ceaseless self-denial of social pleasures, in order that such technical excellence might be attained.

John steadfastly declined the many invitations he received to dinner parties, knowing full well that, after having partaken of a heavy meal, and when in the worst condition to do justice to his art, he would be

expected to play, and, moreover, in all probability, before an inattentive audience.

One of his best paying patronesses was a certain Mrs. De Vereux-Smith, whose children he tried to teach the piano. I say he tried to teach them, because it was evident to me, when they came to take lessons at my keyboard, that they were quite unmusical, besides being very inattentive. Their mother, however, paid well, and John could not afford to quarrel with his bread-and-butter.

Mrs. De Vereux-Smith was an ambitious, vain woman, whose great desire was to shine socially. Having plenty of money, she dressed extravagantly, and, if money could have introduced her to a higher social circle than her own, she would have paid a heavy price to have gratified her desires.

Being a scheming woman, it occurred to her that the easiest way, to become acquainted with various ladies of title, would be to organise a concert on behalf of a charity.

With this intent, she offered her services to a hospital for consumptives, only to meet with a rebuff, because the secretary knew, by experience, that concerts promoted by ambitious society dames for their own glorification, seldom resulted in anything but a loss, and he regarded Mrs. Smith's proposal as an impertinence.

Nothing daunted, Mrs. De Vereux-Smith renewed her offer to an idiot asylum. The committee of this institution also declined with thanks.

I heard all about this in due course after Mrs. De Vereux-Smith had contrived to hold the entertainment I am about to describe. Her husband, plain Mr. Smith, was a very worthy dealer in butter. Unlike his

wife, he was proud of butter. He talked butter, he thought butter, and beyond butter the world, to him, ended. The local gentry, who took no particular interest in that nutritious compound, preferred not to meet the Smiths outside of the butter shop, and, having made up their minds, their decision seemed final. Yet they reckoned without Mrs. Smith, who—the neighbours observed—was always careful to add the distinguished name of 'De Vereux' to her own as a mark of gentility.

Failing to obtain a favourable response to her proposal from various philanthropic institutions, she was delighted to hear the Rev. Harvey Lindsay make a pathetic appeal in church, one Sunday morning, for funds on behalf of the Southburn almshouses, which required the sum of £100 for repairs.

Immediately after service, therefore, the enterprising Mrs. Smith sought out her vicar in the vestry, and offered to organise—on her own responsibility—a concert in aid of the good cause. The innocent, kindly old clergyman warmly thanked his parishioner, little thinking that there could be an ulterior motive in such an offer, and forgetting that "charity covereth a multitude of sins."

He promised her readily all the help he was able to give. His talented son, he was certain, would gladly arrange the musical items: whilst his two daughters, he was sure, would also be interested in such an excellent project. Possibly, even, the great Flügelbrecher, as *fiancé* of his younger daughter, might be persuaded to take part.

Mrs. De Vereux-Smith was delighted. The name of Flügelbrecher, she knew, would 'draw.' Everybody would wish to hear him. Apart from his undisputed

musical renown, the fact that he had once been charged with the murder of Angus Mackay would make him curiously attractive to morbid minds, although the case against him had broken down.

John Lindsay loved his father; and, when the old gentleman mentioned that he had promised John's assistance to Mrs. De Vereux-Smith, the son readily acquiesced, although he foresaw that he should have to give up lessons and devote much valuable time to preparing the musical arrangements if the concert was to be an artistic success.

Gertrude, when John spoke to her, regretted that the concert was not placed entirely in her brother's hands, for her feminine wit divined that Mrs. De Vereux-Smith, under the cloak of charity, might be merely scheming for her own social advancement, and, under the circumstances, there would be a great deal of unnecessary expenditure. However, as it was her father's wish, she wrote to her lover Heinrich, begging him, if he possibly could, to arrange to make an appearance in the village and to name a date.

Herr Flügelbrecher replied, gallantly, that he would do anything in his power to please his sweetheart. Although he, himself, was much in want of money, by travelling third class, and going steerage on the boat, he found, on inquiry, that he could contrive to get to Southburn and back to Hamburg for the sum of £6. His pride, of course, would not allow him to mention his actual expenses, and, as the concert was for charity, he could not think of charging a fee.

Mrs. De Vereux-Smith after this was, I heard, very busy, preparing a concert on the most lavish scale. She intended, she said, that it should make a great impression. The fact that she had obtained a promise from

one distinguished musician, enabled her to implore the assistance of another. But she was diplomatic. At her request the good vicar wrote a letter, giving the history of the almhouses, and explaining how much they were in need of repair. This letter Mrs. De Vereux-Smith enclosed with a note from herself, begging the well-known *prima donna*—the Duchesse de Cherrystones—to consent to sing. A reply came as follows:—"Dear Madam, I am aware that the glorious Jenny Lind once said that 'It is beautiful to be able to sing for purposes of charity.' Yet, although I am always ready to assist in a good cause, I am no believer in indiscriminate charity. Candidly, I am not acquainted with your almhouses; and, were it not for the eloquent letter you have sent me from your clergyman, I should have declined to sing, as I am very busy with engagements. His appeal, however, I have not the heart to refuse. I shall therefore consent to sing for you on the date you mention for the sum of 100 guineas, which sum you will be good enough to enter in the balance-sheet of the concert as a donation from me."

Mrs. De Vereux-Smith's delight on receiving this response was unbounded. She was now sure of getting aristocratic patronage.

Without delay, some circulars were printed, announcing the concert. They were sent by her to almost every lady in the peerage. Such excessive correspondence might make the item for postage considerable, but, as she was giving her time and her services free for the cause, it was absurd to cavil at a few postage stamps.

With a little tact, she obtained no less than six Countesses as patronesses of the concert. Then she wrote to the Marchionesses, who, seeing the names of

the Countesses, regarded the event favourably, and three Marchionesses' names were added to her list. After that she tried the Duchesses, and succeeded in getting two more names.

It was hard work, but Mrs. De Vereux-Smith now felt justified in appealing to various members of the Royal family. To her great delight she obtained the name of one minor Princess, with which she headed her list.

Everybody said that Mrs. Smith was working very hard, and that she deserved to succeed. But when, one morning, the village was placarded with 'double crown' bills announcing 'A Grand Concert in aid of the Southburn Almshouses, under the distinguished patronage of Her Serene Highness the Princess of Undsoweider-und-Nocheinmal,' and a dozen other ladies of title, the neighbours rubbed their eyes and wondered how the butterman's wife had contrived so cleverly. The whisper, indeed, went round that Mrs. Smith was herself actually related to the great De Vereux family, and that it was through the influence of a cousin that she had succeeded. Mrs. Smith herself hinted to John Lindsay that such was the case, being unaware that her children, when taking a lesson from him, had artlessly communicated the fact that 'Ma bought a book she calls a Peerage last week; and she's bin writing lots of letters to Duchesses and Princesses she never 'eard of before.'

Having now obtained several distinguished names Mrs. Smith found, as she had expected, little difficulty in forming a nominal committee of prominent ladies in the neighbourhood, who would not interfere with her, but had no objection to be associated with a concert patronised by a long list of good people.

She secured also the gratuitous services of several more professional musicians and two titled amateurs, namely, the Lady Gwen Taff, a young woman of uncertain age who thought she could sing but really had no music in her, and Lord Guy Fawkes, a tall, handsome, brainless man who consented to act as treasurer, but insisted on having a song composed expressly for him by John Lindsay for the occasion.

Then the rehearsals began. For these John had to give up several lessons. He took a great deal of trouble in composing the song for Lord Fawkes, but this had to be re-written as his lordship insisted in having what he called a 'slur' at the end of each line, so as to suit the 'croup' in his voice. Besides, he protested, the Duchess (his mother) would never allow this and that.

Gertrude, who had promised to accompany the Duchesse de Cherrystones, found it necessary to make more than one long railway journey—at her own expense—to the residence of the great singer; and what with getting a new dress, new millinery, new shoes, and new gloves, her personal disbursements—despite the most rigid economy—came to more than £5. John, for giving up lessons, etc., found he was £3 out of pocket. On the evening in question, moreover, it was necessary for him to hire a brougham to convey his two sisters to and from the concert. Mrs. Mackay, also, had certain expenses. To these poor Flügelbrecher's steamer and rail disbursements had to be added, so, that the total sum these artists lost by the concert was no less than £17, 10s. As the other professional musicians, a cadaverous 'cellist, a long-haired violinist, and a rotund bass singer, gave their services too, they were mulcted in like manner.

Influenced by the long list of patronesses, the sale of tickets was soon brisk. The prices varied from half a crown to one guinea. The object being a good one, many purses were opened. The large room in which the concert was to be held, had accommodation for 400 people. Every seat was soon sold, and the prices of these, together with sundry donations, brought the total amount received up to £200.

On my being conveyed to the concert-room, Mr. Jolly was upset to find that another concert grand was already installed on the platform in charge of a tuner, who attempted to prevent my admission. An enterprising firm of manufacturers, hearing that the great Flügelbrecher was to play, had obtained permission from Mrs. De Vereux-Smith to provide a special instrument. It had been sent down by passenger train with a huge advertisement on the side of the piano. Mr. Jolly angrily insisted on the rival piano being removed. The tuner defied him, and flourished the written permission he had obtained from Mrs. Smith. Leaving me in the van, Mr. Jolly went to that lady, only to find that the rival makers had, besides providing the piano free, subscribed for five guineas' worth of tickets. Here was a dilemma. Herr Flügelbrecher, the artist, refused to play on any instrument but me, and Mrs. Smith was not inclined to return the sum of £5, 5s. subscribed conditionally on the pianoforte being used. A compromise was therefore effected, by both of us being placed on the platform, but we were not on speaking terms.

Never had such concert preparations been made before in Southburn; and never are similar ones likely to be made again.

I could see that the audience, on its arrival, was

astonished by the lavish way in which the room was decorated. There was a Venetian awning and thick carpet from the roadway to the door; brilliant bunting adorned the walls; the platform was a bower of orchids, gardenias, and white chrysanthemums; in a side room during the interval, light refreshments — including champagne and ices—were provided; the waiters wore a special livery; the seats were all beautifully upholstered; the programmes, too, were most gorgeously printed in gold on hand-made paper, tied together with satin ribbons; and last, but not least, the concert attendants wore mediæval Spanish costumes. In short, Mrs. De Vereux-Smith seemed to have forgotten nothing, except to pay her artists.

The programme, musically, was really very good, save for the two amateur performers, the less said of whose efforts the better. Flügelbrecher delighted everyone.

He, of course, had stipulated that he should play on me; and Mr. Jolly, my tuner, had carefully looked me over. The way in which Herr Flügelbrecher played Chopin, in Part I., was fairylike, and Liszt's 'Don Juan' variations, in Part II., brought down the house.

John Lindsay played in two trios for piano, violin, and 'cello; and Gertrude accompanied the *prima donna*, who was listened to with breathless interest and repeatedly encored.

At the end of Part I. the dear old vicar said a "few words." He reminded his audience that "Charity is the gate of the sanctuary which leadeth to the vsion of the Holy Trinity." He had, he said, no respect for that self-boasting charity which neglects all objects of commiseration near and around it, but goes to the end of the earth in search of misery for the mere purpose of talking about it. "My dear friends," he

remarked, impressively, "charity is an eternal debt, which we all rejoice to pay when we are able. Let me remind you," he continued, "that Dr. Johnson wisely said, 'Charity is a universal duty.''

Then the good man went on to enumerate the needs of the Almshouses, concluding with an eloquent vote of thanks to Mrs. De Vereux-Smith for her indefatigable and successful exertions. "A woman," he observed, "who lacks a charitable heart, lacks a pure mind. Our friend, Mrs. De Vereux-Smith, has proved that she indeed possesses a charitable heart; and I am sure she has a pure mind." The vicar said a good deal more, and his flock applauded everything. Whilst he spoke, they forgot that the organiser of the concert was their butterman's wife, until the worthy butterman himself rose to respond for his wife and spoilt everything, after he had acknowledged the motions of thanks, by saying, "And now, gents., business is business—afore I sit down, let me draw your kind attention to my new method of washing butter"—his wife pulled him vigorously by the coat tails—"which enables it to be more easily preserved in the fresh state"—again Mrs. Smith tugged at her husband's tails—"while the flavour is in no wise lost." Mr. Smith had much more to say about butter, but the audience began to laugh and applaud so loudly that the rest of his speech was not heard. Going home that night, Mrs. Smith called her husband a fool, and later on, she gave him a terrible curtain-lecture. But he was no fool, although he had once been arrested at Madeira by the police in mistake for the concert agent Klug.

The concert was considered highly satisfactory until people began to make cutting remarks about vanity

and extravagance. Mrs. Smith, hearing these observations, tossed her head disdainfully. She remembered that she had a desk full of crested note-paper, and that she had been complimented by, and had shaken hands with, a dozen people of title at the concert. Already she felt that she was being presented at Court and becoming familiar with the drawing-rooms of the British aristocracy. Subscribers to the concert might possibly take an interest in the financial result, but, beyond the price of their tickets, they had no liability, and they had received full value for their money.

Next day she began to initial bills, which Lord Fawkes paid unquestioningly.

First, there was a long account for printing tickets, expensive programmes, for lithography, and photography, the whole costing £25, 10s. Next, the hall, for concert and rehearsals, cost £10, 10s. The florist's bill was heavier than she had expected. Presentation bouquets, for various ladies of title and the *prima donna*, orchids, etc., for the platform and the front doorway, came to £50. The Spanish costumes, of course, had to be paid for, as well as the bunting for the hall, the awning, carpets, and special furniture for the artists' room; but that was reasonable enough, namely, £14. The light refreshments, including ices and champagne, were also, she thought, very reasonable, the amount being only £20. Waiters in livery, and fees to a couple of policemen, came to another £5. Lastly, there was a long bill for advertising and 'writing up' the concert in various local papers. These necessary items, together with a big one for postage, totalled £80. In other words, although none of the artists had received a farthing, the concert 'arrangements' had cost £205.

Mrs. De Vereux-Smith knew, however, that close upon £200 had been brought into the hall by the sale of tickets, and that certain anonymous donations had increased the receipts to £206. She, therefore, had great gratification in being able to pay everything and hand over, to the dear vicar, the sum of One Pound sterling, clear profit on the concert, for, of course, the prima donna's fee, which had been taken out of the receipts and formally handed to her only to be given back again, made no difference whatever to the exchequer.

The look of blank astonishment with which the Rev. Harvey Lindsay received the single gold coin was lost on the complacent Mrs. De Vereux-Smith.

"Good gracious! Mrs. Smith," he exclaimed, "surely a village concert cannot have cost nearly £206, which I understand is what was received?"

Nothing abashed, Mrs. De Vereux-Smith produced Lord Fawkes's balance-sheet, and was quite offended when the good man sadly observed, "It has truly been said that careless extravagance wasteth that which diligent labour hath purchased."

She reminded him that the diligent labour had been hers—the labour of the musicians did not occur to her—and that such things as had been bought, were necessary for a distinguished gathering, and that, further, the concert had been a great boom to the village, as it had given much local employment.

She omitted to say that it had been a boom to herself in bringing her in contact, under false pretences, with people who would otherwise not have deigned to have spoken or corresponded with her.

The concert on behalf of the Almshouses was nevertheless the means of doing only one good thing. It made Gertrude Lindsay, as will be described

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presently, acquainted with the great *prima donna*, the Duchesse de Cherrystones.

As regards myself, the double removal upset me for a week, for I caught a cold that night in my middle octave, and my damper pedal was wheezy for some time afterwards.

XVI

THE PRIMA DONNA'S JEWELS

BY F. FRANKFORT MOORE
(Author of "The Jessamy Bride")

"Calamity Pop most wisely,
Determined in everything."
—*Bab Ballads.*

"TRA-LA-LA, Tra-la-la, Tra-la-la, Tra-la-la!"

"Pop!"

It was all right: but I was rather startled at first. The Duchesse was practising a trill. It was quite an exceptional trill. It was a trill possessing the lucidity of Jenny Lind in her best days, combined with the liquidity of Grisi and the splendidity of Patti. The Duchesse was superb!

The 'Pop!' was added by the Duchesse's parrot, Calamity, of which bird more anon.

But who was the Duchesse? Have you never heard of the renowned *prima donna* Madame Belle Yeates, known in private life as the Duchesse de Cherrystones? Of course you have. Well, the triller was she. And I the pianoforte, which had interpreted the best thoughts of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms, under the magic hand of the great Flügelbrecher, was now in Blue Rock Castle, installed in the Duchesse's sumptuous boudoir. Rank may be but a guinea stamp, and

a pianoforte may be a pianoforte for all that. I, at least, have always felt happier and better appreciated amid beautiful surroundings, and the beautiful brocaded cover, trimmed with a flounce of Mechlin lace, with which I was now draped, caused me infinite gratification.

But for Scarlatti, I should have been perfectly happy. Scarlatti was the Duchesse's particular pet—a huge white cat which had a mania for jumping up on my keys and scrambling along them in the weirdest manner, when no one was looking and when I was left open.

It was at the concert just described in aid of a local charity that Gertrude Lindsay had had the honour of accompanying the celebrated Duchesse. How that great singer had been applauded to the echo, when she appeared on the platform! "What a benevolent woman, and what an act of condescension!" thought the crowd, as they listened, enraptured, to every note—good, bad and indifferent — which issued from the Duchesse's vermilion lips.

But I, the piano, was particularly impressed by the clever way in which Gertrude accompanied the singer. Madame was full of moods. If she had not been so, no one would have dared to say that she was a genius. She hurried here and retarded there, and played other tricks leading nowhere; but Gertrude, evidently a quick reader, had always been on the look-out, she was never caught in a *cul de sac*, so to speak; and, in one place, she actually transposed the accompaniment a semitone lower when she perceived that the singer had gone flat.

That was how it came that the Duchesse took a violent fancy to Gertrude: and how, being in want of a 'coach,' she had offered her an engagement as accom-

panist, and companion, on very liberal terms; there was nothing stingy about the Duchesse. No one was more delighted than myself at this sudden turn in the wheel of Fortune for Gertrude, as she had long been struggling hard at the piano to improve herself in order to earn sufficient to maintain her sister, Mrs. Mackay, and the twins, Romeo and Juliet. They had to be fed and clothed, and mother and aunt were painfully aware that the appetites of little children are sometimes extraordinary. Their capacity for wearing out clothes was as incredible as was the love they bore for a huge ugly gollywog which had been given them by 'Aunty' Henriette, and which they insisted upon taking with them everywhere.

At the piano, Gertrude was patient and painstaking, and although she lacked execution, she was a quick reader. Thus, she had developed into a very good 'coach.'

When Gertrude first went to the Castle, the piano in Madame's boudoir did not please her. She therefore suggested that the great singer should buy me. John was only too delighted to make a bargain; and, although I had done so much for him and expected that he would have shed tears on losing me, he was wonderfully self-possessed at the hour of parting. Later on he gave a chuckle (in A flat), when he pocketed £20 clear profit on the transaction. Such, alas! is the gratitude of man.

I felt, consequently, that I was entitled to rejoice on my changed position. My new surroundings overwhelmed me at first by their grandeur. What bewildered me, however, most, was the gorgeous light blue and silver livery, and white turban, of the copper-coloured faced Mahammed, Madame's Indian servant and constant attendant at the Castle. He was a portly

man, with a squeaky falsetto voice, suggesting one of the characters in 'I Cadi,' and his black moustache and whiskers suggested the brushes for the drawing-room grate. Madame, the Duchesse, had picked up Mahammed in the Tyrol, where he was conspicuous at table d'hôte, behind the chair of Sir Charles Evel, Bart. Madame at once recognised Sir Charles, who, the reader will remember, was one of the directors of the Middlesex College of Music before it came to a timely end. That, of course, was no fault of Sir Charles, who had purely a business interest in the Institution, and had not a musical note in his composition. Sir Charles was evidently enjoying himself in the Tyrol, and, when the Duchesse hinted that the Indian servant was just such a man as she herself would like, Sir Charles insisted on Madame's accepting him as a gift. He praised Mahammed up to the azure, and it was evident to Madame that her new servant was a perfect Koh-i-noor of a man. She favoured Mahammed in consequence, and treated him well. But Madame was a fairly good reader of character, and would never trust him with money or articles of value. "Orientals, my dear," she said one day to a lady friend, "are like magpies; they are born thieves." Yes, financially as well as musically, the Duchesse was one of the cleverest of women. It was debatable whether her commercial talent was not greater than her musical genius, because she obtained the highest terms in her profession, and the way she contrived to keep her name constantly before the public was marvellous. She was nevertheless a great artist, and her voice, which had charmed tens of thousands of listeners, never ceased to please. Yet, for all her art, she was neither a good reader nor a quick study, and, as she was preparing to take the leading

rôle in a new opera—a posthumous work of the late Giovanni Zachau—she found Gertrude not merely useful, but indispensable.

On my installation in the Castle, a matinée was given, for the Duchesse never allowed any occasion for *réclame* to pass by. Next day the whole world read that Madame Belle Yeates had received the Baron von Groschild, Her Royal Highness the Princess of Lancaster, and other notabilities at a concert to inaugurate her purchase of the 'A 439 piano,' which the great singer had accidentally discovered and bought for 500 guineas. This, I knew, was wrong, because the actual sum John Lindsay received was £60; but that mistake in the papers was never contradicted. It was strange how the newspapers contrived to be always more than posted up in the doings of the Duchesse. If she had a 100 guinea engagment, it was intimated that the fee she received was 1000 guineas; if Madame bought a cat, half the cats in Catendom were sent to her to choose from—of course Scarlatti was priceless. If the Prince recognised Madame in St. James's Street, there would be a full and complete account in the newspapers, next morning, of what he wore, and what the Duchesse wore, where the Prince was going to, where Madame was going to, where the Prince had come from, and so on. Madame was a genius! Nevertheless, being a genius, she was careless and unmethodical, and glad to shift routine work on to the shoulders of others. Finding Gertrude discreet, modest, well-bred, and capable in matters of business, Madame promptly made the young girl her private secretary, and allowed her all the privileges of the post, much to the disgust of Mahammed, who thought he merited more confidence than he received from his mistress.

In the Duchesse's boudoir, opposite to where I was placed, there stood, built into the wall, an ornamental cupboard or cabinet, having thick plate-glass doors and a special lock. In this cupboard the *prima donna* kept her jewels, and Mahammed, when alone in the room, would stand peering through those glass doors gloating over the priceless necklaces, stars, rings, coronets, and pendants, of diamonds, rubies, pearls, and sapphires. There were also medals, orders, and wreaths of pure gold, the gifts of emperors, kings, princes, musical societies, and millionaires. The collection was valued at over a quarter of a million sterling; it was unique, and could not be replaced. If there were guests at the Castle, the *prima donna's* jewels were the centre of attraction, next to Madame's marvellous singing *bien entendu.*

"Gertrude, my dear," said Madame one day to her private secretary, "I must ask you, in future, to keep the key of my jewel cupboard." She then opened the cabinet doors and explained how, if the plate glass were broken, electric bells would be set ringing all over the Castle, and the only way to get at the jewels without creating a disturbance was by unlocking the doors. Saying this, she switched on an electric light within the case, and, as the precious stones scintillated and blazed, Gertrude could not refrain from clapping her hands and crying out, "How lovely!" Unthinkingly she added, "Duchesse, I could run away with them all!"

"Silly child, I know you better than that," replied the Duchesse, laughing.

Just then there was a cough: both ladies started, for they thought they were alone. "La! it is merely Mahammed!" exclaimed Madame, as the Indian servant, with a deep salaam, presented his mistress

with a tiny cup of strong Liberian coffee on a huge silver salver.

That evening a special train conveyed the *prima donna* to London, for the first performance of Zachau's last opera. As she was departing from the Castle, a Mr. Strong arrived. He was a guest, whom Madame had met somewhere way down South. Gertrude was not going to London, as she was indisposed. For that reason also, she excused herself from entertaining the visitor, who consequently dined in solitude in the library.

After ascertaining that the jewel cabinet was locked, and that the key was safe in her purse, Gertrude rang the bell for a cup of tea. She tried to make herself comfortable before the fire, and endeavoured in vain to read one of Mudie's latest novels.

As she could not fix her attention on it, she came over to me, and played in a listless fashion excerpts from the opera Madame was singing in that night. I felt sorry for Gertrude. Her feverish touch on my keys told me that she was not well. Whilst she was playing, the door opened slowly, and Mahammed sneaked in with the tea. And now occurred something which made me distrust Mahammed more than ever. With his back turned towards Gertrude, he dropped a lozenge, or tabloid, into the little silver teapot. He then retired, and Gertrude presently poured out a cup of what should have been a very fragrant and refreshing beverage. Scarcely had she drunk it, when she fell asleep before the fire, and then I knew that the tea had been drugged. What villainy was on foot? Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed, and nothing interrupted the silence except the loud ticking of an ormolu empire clock opposite to me. Then, as I expected,

Mahammed appeared. He came across on tip-toe to Gertrude, and shook her, but she was fast asleep. Just then Calamity, the parrot, who was dozing, opened one filmy eye, gave a loud 'Pop!' and closed the eye again. Mahammed, startled, shook his fist at the bird; then chuckled to himself (in B .sharp), and quickly locked the door of the room, after which he extracted the contents of Gertrude's pocket. Having found the key he was in search of, he was not long in opening the glass cabinet containing Madame's priceless treasures, and, as he did this, Gertrude unconsciously slept on, occasionally muttering in her sleep the name of Biddy Bramber. She was dreaming of the old woman who, she believed, had such a bad influence over her life.

It was four o'clock in the morning before Madame la Duchesse returned. She was radiant, though tired, because she had experienced a colossal triumph, thanks to the clever way in which Gertrude had coached her for her part. Madame entered singing merrily, and was astonished to find Gertrude asleep in a cold room before the ashes of a fire which had long since gone out. With some difficulty, Madame roused her private secretary, and then began to scold her for sitting up. The *prima donna* soon perceived that Gertrude was extremely unwell, and that indeed she could scarcely walk; so she was conducted by a maid very tenderly to bed.

It is difficult for me to express the emotions I felt when I saw how ill poor Gertrude looked. That there would be a commotion when the theft was discovered, and that an innocent girl would suffer for a guilty man, I felt sure.

At noon it came. Madame's bell rang violently.

There was a dreadful commotion. She burst into Gertrude's room crying, "My jewels! Where are my jewels? Where have you hidden them?"

"They must be in the cabinet," I could hear the drowsy voice of Gertrude replying.

"Then show them to me," demanded Madame, excitedly.

"Oh, do not say that anything has happened," came the frightened voice of Gertrude. "You are joking, Duchesse. You have taken them out."

At this, Madame evidently grew furious. She almost dragged Gertrude along as she hurried into the boudoir towards the cabinet. "See!" she cried, "it is empty."

Gertrude turned white and tottered: Scarlatti, the cat, took fright, jumped up on my treble, and tore down to the bass and back again like a whirlwind.

"This would not have happened," remarked Mahammed, solemnly, "had you trusted *me*, Madame. Shall I go for the police?"

"Yes, go!" cried Madame. Mahammed hurried off. Like a caged tigress, the *prima donna* then paced up and down the room followed by Scarlatti. She —the Duchesse—glared, and looked as if she could murder; whilst Gertrude, dazed, remained silent. Presently, the visitor of the night before, Mr. Strong, entered the room. He had heard, he said, that Madame was in trouble. He cross-questioned her, and ascertained that no one except Gertrude had had access to the cabinet, that the lock had not been tampered with, that Gertrude had been all night alone in the room, that when she first saw the jewels she had exclaimed, "Oh, how lovely they are; I could *steal* them"—or words to that effect—that she was poor, and that,

moreover, she had no explanation whatever to offer in the matter.

"It is extraordinary how looks may deceive," observed Mr. Strong, eyeing Gertrude. "You are sure, Miss Lindsay, you know nothing of this matter?"

"I know nothing of this matter," replied Gertrude, trembling; and then raising her voice, she added, "I fail to perceive that you, sir, have any right to question me as to my doings."

Mr. Strong smiled. "Believe me," he said, "it is only that I wish to help you all I can." Scarcely had he spoken than Mahammed entered with a diamond necklace and a string of pearls. "These," he said, holding out the diamonds, "were hidden between the mattress and feather bed in the next room; and those" —he raised the pearls—"were in Miss Lindsay's portmanteau."

"Gertrude!" almost shrieked Madame, "how could *you* have done it? You, whom I trusted."

"Appearances are certainly against you, Miss Lindsay," observed Mr. Strong, in a dry, matter-of-fact tone.

XVII

CALAMITY POP'S ESCAPADE

BY JOHN THOMAS
Harpist to the Queen

THERE is an old West African proverb which says that "Calamity hath no voice." Calamity Pop had too much voice. She possessed a peculiar talent for imitating the opening of champagne bottles. Moreover, she had a knack of remembering and repeating clearly, at the most unexpected times, peculiar intonations of the human voice and strange words and sentences.

When Mahammed, after drugging Gertrude, had proceeded to steal the *prima donna's* jewels, the reader will remember that he was startled by a loud 'pop!' from the parrot. He had shaken his fist at the bird and declared that he would kill it if he had a chance.

Mahammed was not a man to forget any form of cruelty which he threatened.

Intelligence and docility had hitherto marked the career of Calamity Pop. She was a well domesticated bird. For fifty years she had been regarded as a bachelor. At the end of that time she had earned the Queen's bounty by laying triplet eggs, and thus astonishing certain of her human friends who considered themselves bird-fanciers. Otherwise Calamity Pop's career had been blameless.

A439.

Living at Blue Rock Castle the bird ought to have been a Blue Rock lory. Instead, she was an Amazon, with an immensely strong beak, a thick fleshy tongue, and soft fleshy toes. Her forehead was blue, her head and throat yellow, her body a brilliant green, her beak black, and her feet ash-coloured.

Calamity Pop was exceedingly musical, and could whistle many operatic airs out of the Duchesse's repertoire. She had not been named 'Calamity' because her cries were the frequent cause of distress, nor 'Pop' because of her ability to startle strangers by loud reports like the opening of champagne bottles, but because, when she first came to the Duchesse, the bird would insist upon pronouncing those well-known concerts at St. James's Hall, familiarly called the 'Saturday Pop,' as 'Calamity Pop.'

Now parrots, we know, will sometimes live for more than a century, and thereby hangs a tale, for Calamity Pop, being a lady bird, never told her age. She looked young, but she was nevertheless old, because, before she had been purchased by the Duchesse, she had belonged to old Zachau; but before she had come to Zachau she had been the property of a famous Welsh bard, whose name was 'Twm Shon Catti.'

Twm had taught her many Welsh melodies, and even to take part in pennillion singing. Calamity Pop had frequently been present at the bardic contests, which took place in connection with weddings in the neighbourhood; and, as Twm enjoyed a high reputation as an extempore pennillion singer, his services had always been secured for such occasions.

He had usually taken Calamity Pop with him, because her unexpected ejaculations, from time to time, kept the company in roars of laughter.

As the parrot and I spent most of the day together at Blue Rock Castle, and she was loquacious, I heard all about the weddings.

The proceedings were generally as follows:—The friends of the bride assembled very early, on the morning of the wedding, at her home, in order to be prepared to parley with the bridegroom, and to throw every possible obstacle in his way, on his arrival to claim his bride. The door was therefore locked and barred.

Of course, the services of Twm Shon Catti were secured for the occasion, and he was accompanied by my clever companion, Calamity Pop. In course of time, the bridegroom would arrive and give three loud knocks at the door.

Then from within was heard a voice inquiring, "Who are you? and what do you want?"

From without came this answer, "I come to claim my affianced bride!"

(From within.) "What, you? Why, you are an impostor! Go about your business, unless you are prepared to prove your right to the young lady by showing that you possess the accomplishments of a Welsh gentleman. In the first place, you must accept the challenge of Twm Shon Catti to a bardic contest in pennillion singing, and you must vanquish him before the door can be opened to you to claim the bride—when you find her!"

This challenge being accepted, the contest commenced without delay. After a long and spirited altercation, in the form of pennillion, abounding in sallies of wit and satirical invectives against each other, the bard, to the astonishment of all the guests, was obliged to acknowledge himself vanquished.

The door would then be opened, and the bridegroom with his party entered the house triumphantly. But a new difficulty arose. The bridegroom was informed that he must discover the hiding-place of the bride!

During this time, Calamity Pop had not only learnt by heart all the pennillion she had been so attentively listening to, but she was also taking in the sallies and jests of the inmates against the bridegroom, who would be searching high and low, unable to discover the whereabouts of the bride. The groom's repeated failures were greeted with roars of laughter.

"He can't find her!" the bride's friends would exclaim; whereupon Calamity Pop would catch the sentence and join in with the others, exclaiming, "Ha! ha! ha! he can't find her. Pop!" This would arouse more hilarity than ever.

At last, however, the happy lover would succeed in finding his sweetheart, and bring her forward to present her to the jovial assembly.

Nevertheless, his troubles were not yet at an end. Oh, dear, no! The next test was to discover whether he was an accomplished rider.

The bride and her party had to be allowed to start on horseback in the direction of the church, some minutes in advance of the bridegroom and his party. The penalty, if he failed to succeed in overtaking her before reaching the church, was that "he lost his love for ever!"

When, therefore, the time arrived for the bridegroom to follow, it may be imagined that he scampered along for dear life after the bridal party. To his dismay, just as he was on the point of overtaking them, what should he find but a formidable barrier across the road, a thick rope, held firmly at either end by his neighbours,

who were bent on making him pay toll on his wedding morning for the luxury of getting married!

Rapidly paying his footing, in order to be allowed to proceed in quest of his bride, he dug his spurs into his steed. Never had the young man ridden so furiously before.

With a tremendous effort, when the bridal party were nearing the church, he succeeded—so Calamity Pop related—in overtaking his lady-love; whom he forthwith led to the altar, and the wedding ceremony was solemnised.

Yet, as they left the church, had he not been on the alert, she would again have slipped away from him, so as to reach home first before his return, and hide once more. Knowing this, the newly-married man kept a firm hold on his wife's rein, and, as they arrived home together, attended by their friends and relatives, they formed a splendid cavalcade.

They then sat down to a sumptuous wedding breakfast; after which speeches, full of eloquence, would be delivered, and epigrams made in honour of the bride and bridegroom.

Twm Shon Catti, the bard, having partaken freely of the immortal mead, the national beverage so well known to bard and minstrel, as a means of exciting inspiration, having also good-humouredly forgiven the bridegroom for having excelled him in the bardic contest, would come forward, and, after sweeping his fingers over the strings of his harp, would extemporise a magnificent panegyric in honour of the surpassing beauty of the bride, and the heroic bravery of the bridegroom, creating the greatest enthusiasm.

The assembled guests, one and all, would thereupon declare him inspired and unsurpassable, notwithstanding

his temporary defeat that morning by the bridegroom.

Upon the allusion to his defeat, the bard would reply, with a good-natured smile: "Was not the bridegroom also inspired? Did not his passionate love for the fair maiden, which would give him the 'Open Sesame' to her presence, inspire him, and increase his desire to gain the victory over me? Who would not have been inspired under similar circumstances?"

Now, no one would enjoy such a festive entertainment more than Calamity Pop. She would listen attentively and take in everything. Long afterwards, whilst pondering on that eventful day, she would ejaculate many a Welsh sentence, which would be lost upon her English hearers, and she would chuckle to herself, when neglected by others, at the possession of a fund of joy and delight which she could at all times recall, and which they did not dream of, much less understand.

Only the reader who had the good fortune, like the present writer, to attend that grand eisteddfod which was held one evening during a conference of incorporated musicians at Cardiff, can form any idea of the enchanting entertainment which used to follow a Welsh wedding.

I can remember, on that occasion, the great bard seated in his bardic chair, with the two Welsh giants, 'Gog and Magog'—standing on either side of the throne—as guardians of the muse, with their magic staffs (a large leek attached to the end of each) with which they enabled the candidates for honours to take in, through their nostrils, copious sniffs of aromatic inspiration before the 'final touches' were solemnly administered by the 'inspired bard,' who imparted to them—through the medium of a mysterious instrument

(a kind of grinding machine only known to the Druids), the sound of which he ground into their ears—the divine bardic afflatus.

The reader who *was* present at that ceremony will also recall the devoted attachment displayed by the great bard to a damosel whom he addressed as 'My Fair One!' as he paraded the magic circle, with his arm round her waist, and with her head fondly resting upon his manly shoulder.

The 'fair lady' (although rather masculine in appearance) turned out to be remarkably gifted; inasmuch as she carried off many coveted prizes, whereupon whispers were heard of 'favouritism' and 'corruption.'

But the secret of the 'fair one's' success was that the great bard had imparted to her an extra dose of inspiration, which, as she was his bride, was but natural.

Indeed, that was an eventful evening, and ever to be remembered.

Had Calamity Pop been there, how enchanted she would have been.

But, by that time, she had passed into the possession of Zachau, and Zachau had been the cause of the bird learning many questions on musical theory, because her cage had stood in Zachau's music room whilst he had given harmony lessons to his pupils. The bird remembered, in consequence, a jumble of phrases which she repeated to herself at odd moments and in droll situations. Thus, if she turned a somersault in her cage, she would croak, "What is meant by the first inversion?"

Now Calamity Pop was the sworn enemy of Scarlatti, the Duchesse's cat, and if the latter came too near her cage he would be deprived of some of his white fur.

The reason of the parrot's dislike for the cat was jealousy. Being musical, the bird was cut to the quick by Scarlatti's ability to jump on my keys whenever she liked, and play fugues on me as her soft paws ascended and descended my keyboard.

I, beautiful piano that I was, was a standing mystery to the knowing bird. What she could not comprehend was where my sound came from. Her one ambition was to discover this great secret, and to play on me.

So she planned, for a long time, to get out of her cage, and one evening, although covered up, she had completed the undoing of the wire which hooked her into her cage. Her time had come.

No sooner had Mahammed left the room with the contents of half the jewel cabinet than Calamity Pop opened the door of her cage, looked out, and made a careful exit.

The room was silent. Gertrude, before the fire, was unconscious.

"Hulloa, there!" Calamity Pop said, softly. "What's the difference between the diatonic and the chromatic scale?"

There was no answer. Even Scarlatti, oblivious of mice, was sound asleep after a good supper.

"Pop!" exclaimed the parrot, making a bang like the explosion of a cork. Then she whispered, seductively, "Of what does a common chord consist?"

Scarlatti stirred, and whispered, in cat language, "This place is haunted."

"What is a dissonant triad?" resumed Polly, in sepulchral tones.

"Your three eggs were," replied Scarlatti, drowsily.

"What is a plagal cadence?" continued the parrot.

"I never believed in spiritualism before," muttered

the cat, "but I've had enough of this. I can't be well."

Thoroughly alarmed, Scarlatti, still half asleep, sprang from my keyboard and fled to the Duchesse's bedroom.

This was what Calamity Pop wanted. The coast was now clear. Her ambition to know where my sound came from could be gratified. Firing off several 'Pops' as a *feu-de-joie*, with beak and claw she clambered first down to the floor from her cage, then waddled across the room, and then climbed up the back of a chair on to my keys.

"What is a passing note?" said Polly to herself, as she trod gingerly over my keys.

"A note not belonging to a chord, any more than you belong to me," I thought.

"Pop!" went Polly.

"Point out a dozen faults in the following phrase," croaked Polly, resuming the harmony lesson, and imitating the gruff voice of old Zachau.

Then, tired of walking over my keys, the bird climbed up on to my music desk and regarded my strings.

My top had been left open, so she was at liberty to explore my interior.

"That's where the sound comes from, is it?" soliloquised the bird. "Pop! What a grand place to lay eggs in!"

The large bass strings of a grand piano afforded excellent foothold, so Polly straddled along contentedly. In the middle of the instrument she began whistling the 'March of the Men of Harlech.' Then she tried to play on me with her beak, harp-fashion, as she remembered Twm Shon Catti had done with his fingers.

But, as my dampers held tight, she could get little

sound. Whilst amusing herself in this manner, Calamity Pop suddenly espied the handful of bird seed on my soundboard beneath my strings which Romeo had scattered there. People often drop pins, needles, beads, sweets, crumbs of bread, and bits of biscuit inside pianos, and forget that such things are liable to cause jarrings.

Whether it was to obviate a jarring, or because Calamity Pop was greedy, she determined to rescue the bird seed or perish in the attempt. So she forced her strong beak between my strings. She pressed her beak far down. She secured a big piece of biscuit. Then she tried to withdraw her beak. In vain. My powerful strings held her as in a vice.

In some grand pianos there is a considerable depth between the strings and the top when shut down; but I was one of those instruments that are built on the narrow-gauge principle. My top, when down, was very close to my strings. I mention this so that what followed may be understood.

Whilst Calamity was struggling to get her huge beak free, Mahammed entered the room for the remainder of the jewels, and heard the noise inside me.

"What! ho!" he cried. "So I've caught you, my beauty, have I?"

Polly was too surprised to struggle for a moment.

"It is very wrong to leave a piano open at night," said Mahammed, "and let all the dust in."

Calamity Pop began to realise his wicked intention; she tried to squawk, but could not, and I could feel her heart beating wildly against my strings. I would have given anything to have helped the poor bird to extricate herself, but what could I do? I was powerless.

As Mahammed approached, the bird struggled

violently; her eyes had the look of a sheep about to be slaughtered.

Mahammed rubbed his hands and chuckled. "The Duchesse will be much obliged to me for shutting up her piano," he said.

Calamity Pop became frantic. This was her last chance.

Suddenly Mahammed banged down my top, pressed heavily on it, and turned the key in front. A sound like the cracking of bones was audible; I shivered with horror.

Poor Calamity! Her inquisitiveness to know the secret of my sound had been her destruction. Her back was no doubt broken. She had apparently been crushed between my top and my strings, pinned down and flattened out like a butterfly in a collector's box.

Satisfied that he had killed the bird, Mahammed had carefully arranged my ornamental cover. He had then gone off with the remainder of the jewels, as has been already related.

Little did the Duchesse, when she returned in the early morning to the Castle so happily, suspect the whereabouts of her pet, Calamity Pop.

XVIII

KEYBOARD LOVE

BY FREDERICK CORDER
(Fellow and Prof., Royal Academy of Music)

AS the nearest police station was fourteen miles away, Mr. Homes had suggested that Gertrude might be locked into a room of the west wing of the Castle. She was accordingly incarcerated in what was known as the Blue Chamber.

'Ill news travels fast.' That evening the London papers were full of the 'Daring Robbery of a Singer's Jewels'; and Gertrude's name was mentioned as that of the suspected thief.

Upon seeing these reports in the papers, her brother set off for the Castle in much perturbation.

He was admitted to the presence of his sister.

"What is all this about? What have you done, Gertrude? Speak!" he cried, in an agony.

His sister seemed dazed; her eyes were fixed and glassy, opening and shutting mechanically, as she alternately rose and fell back on her couch. She did not attempt to deny the charge against her. All she could say was that she knew nothing about the theft, except that Witch Bramber must have hypnotised her, and thus brought about the trouble. She seemed quite resigned, because, as she said in her abstraction,

"Being born on Bank Holiday" (she meant Black Wednesday), "I was predestined to the police station."

John groaned aloud. He had heard the evidence against his sister, and had to admit, sorrowfully, that the case seemed conclusively against her. She had been doing so well of late, that although her fiancé, Flügelbrecher, had not been successful, John had felt that both Mrs. Mackay and her children, who had been recently provided for by Gertrude, would no longer need his help. Not that he begrudged it; but, to his own surprise, he had fallen deeply in love, and he had heard that matrimony was expensive. At first he had not suspected his insanatory condition. He had been studying so closely for his degree, and had been engaged so earnestly in teaching, that he had not had the opportunities most young men have of worrying his sentiments into a state of inflammation.

At the Middlesex College of Music, Gertrude had met Mdlle. Henriette D'Annoy, who had sung with such an unpleasant vibrato, and such a pronounced lisp, at my début. Gertrude and Henriette had become bosom friends. When Gertrude left home, what could be more natural than that her friend should call to inquire after her, and what could be more natural than that John should take a liking to Zachau's pretty step-daughter? And what more natural than that her visits should thereupon increase in frequency? In fact, she was just screwing him up to the point of asking her to be his wife when the appalling tidings of the theft at Blue Rock Castle appeared in the papers.

And now, having seen his sister, it seemed to him that Henriette, who so passionately loved him, must be resigned for ever. It was impossible for him to utter the fateful proposal now. As to Gertrude, he

could only surmise that she had abstracted and hidden the jewels in a fit of somnambulism.

Whilst John was talking over his fears regarding his sister to Madame, there was a commotion outside the door.

Mr. Homes, the detective, with two assistants, was bringing in a burly, rough-looking man, who was protesting loudly.

"Madame," said Mr. Homes, "I have at length discovered a clue—my men saw this vagabond lurking about the Castle grounds. They shadowed him from the railway-station last night. His behaviour was most eccentric; we observed him for hours doing nothing but extending and contracting his fingers and hands. He may have had a hand or a finger in the robbery; but, before arresting him, I thought it well to bring him before you, as he says he knows you well."

"I should tink I did!" cried the prisoner. "Ma chère Cherrystones! You know me well, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"What? It is my dear Monsieur Von Hammertitszki!" exclaimed the Duchesse, rushing across the room, and, without ceremony, embracing her visitor.

"I never get a chance!" remarked Mr. Homes, in disgust, as he slipped off the handcuffs and, with his men, left the room.

John Lindsay, likewise, saw he was not wanted, and, with a sigh, went off to interview his sister once more.

"Loveliest of lovely creatures! Most beautiful of beauties! Divinest of divinities! I am exceedingly glad to see you," exclaimed Monsieur Von Hammertitszki, patting the Duchesse affectionately on the cheek. He escorted her to a seat.

"You know, ma chère Duchesse, there is only one woman in this world who can sing. That is yourself.

You know, moreover, that there is only one man in this wide world who can play the pianoforte. That one man," and he smote his chest, "is Monsieur Von Hammertitszki. Your men, ma chère Duchesse, have been pulling me about in a most disgraceful manner. They tell me you have been robbed of your jewels. I do not believe them. You are too clever for that," and the pianist regarded the Duchesse steadily, and winked a worldly and incredulous eye.

"Flatterer!" replied the Duchesse, with a slight blush.

As I had anticipated, it was not long before the great pianist came over to me. I trembled. He was a man of bear-like proportions and powerful build. His hands were big and muscular, and yet, I knew, his touch was soft as velvet.

"You don't mean to say, ma chère Duchesse," exclaimed Hammertitszki, "that you have invested in a new piano?"

"One must do these things, sometimes," said Madame, apologetically.

"Quite so, one must keep one's name before the public, ma petite, *n'est-ce pas*?" answered Hammertitszki.

"*Aussi*," Madame began, "it was the Flügelbrecher piano."

"*Pouf*!" grunted Hammertitszki, jealously. "Flügelbrecher cannot play at all; listen to me. I, Hammertitszki, am the only pianist who ever lived or ever will live. In me the keyboard feels its greatest exponent."

He turned the key, and opened my top.

There was a loud "Pop!" and a flapping of wings, as Calamity, having meanwhile freed her beak from my strings, made a sudden dash for liberty, and flew into the face of the pianist,

"By Blue!" cried the Russian. "A thousand thunders! This piano is alive!"

"Poor dear Calamity!" exclaimed Madame, catching the bird and placing it tenderly in its cage, "how did you get there?"

"Never say die!" croaked the bird mournfully, as she staggered with difficulty to her trough, and began to eat hungrily after her long fast.

This interruption having ended, the great virtuoso began.

Truly his touch was thrilling. It is difficult to compare great musicians; but, much as I had grown to like Flügelbrecher, I must confess that he had not the same electricity in his playing.

Hammertitszki preludised softly, modulating from key to key until, when in F sharp major, he fluttered off Henselt's '*Si oiseau j'étais*,' so delicately and daintily playing *pianissimo* without the soft pedal, that I myself wondered how it was done. And then Hammertitszki, using only one finger of each hand, extemporised variations on the same study; and, as he played, he began to chant in a monotone, cajolingly addressing the Duchesse.

"Oh, most adorable of thy sex, listen to the heavenly effects which the great Hammertitszki is producing out of this piano," he sang.

"Listen," he continued. "When-the-sun-sets-in-all-its-golden-splendour-over-the-luxuriant-foliage-of-a-tropical-forest, men, in wonder, think-that-there-is-nothing-more-glorious. But, what-is-the-charm-of-a-single-summer compared to the charms of thy . . . ." (*forte*). "Oh, Duchesse?" Then there came a *sforzando* chord.

"When listening to thy treasure of a voice with its golden notes, men say how dear it is, and wonder if they were ever so thoroughly done before. Then they

feel that there is indeed the best . . . . " (melody in the bass). " O Duchesse ! "

His words grew yet wilder and more incoherent with hysterical emotion, as he performed a still more wondrous feat with his hands.

" Yes," he cried, " you are indeed a clipper in the star line—forgive the passin' jeer ; 'tis not first-class—but could you expect me, whom you only esteem a heavy mail, to make so smooth a passage from C to C on a piano ? " I think he pronounced it, in his foreign way, P an' O, but, as he spoke, he executed a wondrous Hindoo scale.

" Ah ! " she murmured in admiration, " that is an Indian notion."

" And you see I fly through it, like the great Eastern I am," he replied.

Familiar as I had been with the expression ' cupboard love,' I had never experienced what keyboard love was before. The great pianist, Hammertitszki, was wooing the *prima donna*, Belle Yeates, through the medium of my keys. In fairness to his executive skill, I must say that his playing was far better than the words which accompanied it. He was a curious man, was Hammertitszki, an artist from brain to finger-tips, and a man who, if he once made up his mind to magnetise a listener, seldom failed. That he fascinated the Duchesse was evident ; for the sound of his playing would have excited her, like a canary, to responsive warbling, but he had thrown the handkerchief, so to speak, and the caged flutterer sank into silence, allowing him to have it all his own way.

Before Hammertitszki rose from my keyboard, he, who had been dragged in as a rogue, was the accepted suitor of the Duchesse de Cherrystones, the greatest singer of the age. Verily, fiction is stranger than fact.

XIX

FLÜGELBRECHER'S FAITH

BY F. WEBER

(Organist, German Chapel Royal, St. James's Palace)

WALLS have ears. They have something more than ears. Stethescope a wall and you will hear a surprising deal going on within it. The insides of walls may be tapestried and papered, but the outsides are left bare, and through the pores of brick and mortar myriad little insects penetrate and deposit their ova. I, being placed close to the wall of Madame's boudoir, soon became aware that there were crickets, beetles, and hundreds of mice in Blue Rock Castle, and that a few burrows of the mice extended to the most distant parts of the building. Thus, although the Blue Room in the east wing was a considerable distance off, I could —owing to the acoustical properties of the walls— hear every word spoken in that east wing as plainly as if it were telephoned. Whilst the love-making had been going on between Hammertitszki and the Duchesse, I was painfully conscious of what was taking place in the chamber in which Gertrude was locked up.

As Madame kept open house, the Castle was usually full of visitors. The servants were therefore by no means surprised when Mrs. Mackay with her two

children (Juliet carrying the gollywog) arrived, and desired to see her sister at once. I could hear, through the wall, the distant door being unlocked, as the widow and her twins were admitted. I could hear how affectionately Mrs. Mackay embraced her sister, and how merrily the innocent little children greeted their auntie. Then I heard John Lindsay enter. He began to question, but could get little information from his sister. "My disgrace, dear John," she said, "will, I know, be a family disgrace. Your pupils will fall off, owing to what has happened. They would have no faith in your teaching if you were ostracised socially. Without the faith of the pupil, it is as impossible to teach music, as, without the faith of the patient, it is impossible for the physician to heal.

"But, if you are innocent," John urged, "where can there be the disgrace you speak of?"

"Ah, you forget," faltered Gertrude, "that the evidence against me is overwhelming, and that I can give no explanation. Moreover, I honestly believe that wicked Biddy Bramber, through some evil influence, actually caused me to commit the theft of which I am accused, and for which I shall probably be sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. Fancy, dear children, your auntie being a convict!"

"Hush!" said Mrs. Mackay, "you should not say such things before the children, even if they should be true, which they are not."

"I cannot help saying these things," replied Gertrude, sorrowfully. "If I am disgraced, what will become of the twins? Your husband was a distinguished musician. Had these been children of a man in any other profession, they might be received into some well-appointed establishment, and kept and educated without charge

to you. Even commercial bagmen have orphanages which have been well endowed."

"Yes, I know," John gloomily rejoined. "Musicians may at times be improvident. The only orphanage they now have has scarcely begun, and is wanting, and waiting for, endowments. But let us not dwell on this unpleasant topic."

"How can I help dwelling on it," said Gertrude, "when I think of my dear little Romeo lacking food, or my sweet Juliet stretched on a bed of sickness, without proper medical attendance?" and Gertrude clasped the two little children close to her.

Just then I could hear the door of the distant chamber open. A gruff voice, like that of a police constable, said: "We are sorry to hinterrupt, Madam, but our hinstructions are, to convey you downstairs. A brougham is being got ready to drive you to the police station." Then I could hear a click, as if the poor innocent Gertrude had been handcuffed.

Meanwhile, whilst Madame and Mons. Von Hammertitszki had been billing and cooing in the room where I was placed, Herr Flügelbrecher was announced.

He seemed half mad with excitement: judging by his distracted appearance, he had not had a wink of sleep for forty-eight hours. Flügelbrecher was a tall, handsome man, of five-and-thirty, and he had large eyes, which were feverishly brilliant. He was a contrast to the heavy, broad-shouldered, pompous and phlegmatic Hammertitszki.

Flügelbrecher, though a Teuton, had all the fire of the Celt, and, excited as he was, could not now master his outraged feelings.

"I tell you, Duchesse," he shouted, by way of greeting her, "zat zis charge against my fiancé is preposterous,

cruel, idiotic, monstrous, outrageous! Can you entertain ze idea of her guilt for one moment?"

"But my jewels have disappeared," whimpered the Duchesse, putting her lace handkerchief to her eyes.

"Confound your jewels, Madame," answered Flügelbrecher, passionately; "what business have ladies mit jewels, if zey lead to such trouble? It is only vanity zat causes women to set their hearts on jewels!"

"You are unbearably rude, sir!" exclaimed Hammertitszki, rising and frowning on the rival pianist. "Evidence is dead against the girl. She does not even protest her innocence."

"All she says," remarked Madame, taking Hammertitszki's arm, "is, 'It is fate. I knew it was coming. This is Biddy Bramber's nefarious work!' and then she begins to cry."

At this moment the door was flung open, and Gertrude entered, pale and trembling, with her hair in disorder, but appearing more beautiful than ever. On beholding his lady-love, the feelings of Flügelbrecher were best expressed by those immortal lines of Schiller:—

"*Da fasst ihn namenlos Entzücken:*
Wie ein Gebild aus Himmels Höh'n
Sieht er die Jungfrau vor sich steh'n."

This beautiful girl was led into the room between two constables in plain clothes, who were followed by John Lindsay and Mrs. Mackay and the twins. The children, not understanding what was happening, began to cry.

Flügelbrecher, on seeing the handcuffs, boiled over with rage. With fists clenched, and head proudly

thrown back, he stood glaring at the constables. "*Donnerwetter! Ihr unverschämte Schlingel!*" he exclaimed, lapsing into German in his excitement. "*Ihr elende Kerle! Lasst das Fräulein augenblicklich in Ruh!*"

"We dunno what gibberish the gent is talking," replied the senior constable, stolidly, "but we 'as our horders, and we means to carry them hout."

"My dear Heinrich," said John, interposing, "pray do not interfere. This unfortunate occurrence will doubtlessly be cleared up by the jewels being found. God forbid that I should plead that my sister was not in her right mind; but I do believe that the theft, if it can be called a theft, may have occurred whilst she was in a state of somnambulism."

"Do you call yourself her brother?" asked Flügelbrecher sarcastically. "Gertrude is ze purest angel zat ever lived! Ze whole thing is a cruel plot. It is impossible that she can be guilty of theft. Even if I had seen her take ze jewels, I should know--yes, know—that my eyes deceived me. I declare to you all, and will stand up to fight any man who gainsays me, zat Gertrude Lindsay, my future wife, is incapable of theft. *Sie ist ganz unfähig etwas schlimmes zu thun!*"

The feebleness of the furious Flügelbrecher's arguments somewhat amused the representatives of the law: they thought the foreigner mad.

But now a great change came over Gertrude. In spite of her terrible position, she looked perfectly radiant. Her lover's firm belief in her innocence metamorphosed her from a despairing prisoner into a happy and delighted woman. Nothing could have occurred to have made her feel more blessed than

this, for she remembered the words of Biddy Bramber's prophecy :—

"A girl-child if born
On Black Wednesday in the morn,
Must have sorrow all her life,
And shall ne'er become a wife ;
Yet a husband she shall find,
If her lover good and kind
Doth believe her every word."

Heinrich Flügelbrecher was her lover, and he believed in her innocence. Faith like his should remove mountains of difficulty. In spite of her present distress Gertrude felt supremely happy; she would now willingly face her trial. "I am ready," she said, cheerfully.

XX

BIDDY'S SPELL IS BROKEN

BY H. CHILVER WILSON
(Baritone, Philharmonic Society, etc.)

AT these words, spoken in a voice full of calm and happy resignation, the senior constable, who had a moment before left the room, re-entered. "Now, miss, we must be making a move," he said, not unkindly.

The women burst into tears; even the Duchesse forgot for the moment the loss of her jewels, as she saw the girl, whom they all loved, about to be led from the room. Just then the door opened, and the figure of Mr. Strong appeared.

"Stay, this lady is innocent," he said, in a tone which carried conviction to the minds of all. "Madame," he added, bowing to the Duchesse, "when we met at Monte Carlo last season, I was travelling 'incognito,' as is frequently my custom. Allow me."

The Duchesse took the card which he handed her, and exclaimed, in a voice trembling with excitement, "Mr. Shamrock Homes!" The effect was electrical; the police officers, upon hearing the name of the famous detective, assumed submissive attitudes, and awaited his further orders.

"But the thief—my jewels!—explain," said the Duchesse.

"Pardon me, Duchesse," interposed Herr Flügelbrecher. "Before we hear your explanation, Mr. Homes, had we not first better release Miss Lindsay from her degrading position?"

Shamrock Homes himself hastened to free Gertrude's slender wrists, while she, now quite overcome, would have fallen, had not her lover supported her, and murmured words of encouragement and endearment, while the rest of those present turned away, feeling that such moments are for lovers only. All this while I had been a mute though eager listener, and a thrill of pleasure now ran through my strings. Mrs. Mackay, who was standing close by, turned round and took from my lid a copy of the *Southburn Argus*, which was lying there, and casually glancing down its columns, suddenly cried, "How extraordinary! Gertrude, Gertrude, listen!"

"Yesterday a strange occurrence took place on the outskirts of our town. In days gone by, what we are about to relate would have been put down to witchcraft; but in these more enlightened times, we can afford to disregard popular superstitions, and the mystery will doubtless be solved in a few days. Yesterday a number of boys chased a black cat for a considerable distance, and cruelly pelted the harmless creature with stones. One missile seemed fatal, for the cat, hit on the head, fell as if dead. Recovering itself, it limped off with difficulty, and sought refuge behind a pile of stones. With a whoop the boys soon reached the spot, but the cat had disappeared. In its place they were astonished to find an old woman, well known in the neighbourhood as Biddy Bramber, in a dying condition, and with a fearful wound in her forehead, which was bleeding profusely. The poor old

woman was quite unable to speak, and before the boys could fetch a doctor, she was dead. An inquest will be held next Wednesday, before which time it is hoped that the mystery of her death will be cleared up, and the cat, which disappeared in such an extraordinary fashion, discovered."

Gertrude, strangely agitated, said, "That will never be, for Biddy Bramber herself was the cat; a witch has the power to thus transform herself, but must resume her human form before death. Heinrich, dear Heinrich," she said, turning to her lover, her eyes suffused with glad tears, "now that this evil influence is removed, which has hung over my life like a darkening cloud, there is at last happiness in store for us both."

The Duchess, who had watched this little scene with interest, but who, nevertheless, had not forgotten her jewels, murmured, "I trust so, indeed, dear. And *now*, perhaps Mr. Shamrock Homes will tell us how he has been so clever as to discover everything."

"My investigations," said Mr. Homes, "led me to Mahammed's quarters; I found in his room a loose board, and half the jewels hidden beneath the floor. They were packed up in a parcel marked 'Glass, with Care' (here one of the constables coughed, and the Duchesse looked daggers) and addressed, ready for dispatch. I at once concluded that the other half of the jewels had already been sent on to the same address, and that, if the thieves were to be caught, it was best to allow this packet to be sent off as well and watch its arrival. I therefore carefully retied the parcel and left it exactly as I found it. Since Mahammed had gone off to fetch the police, he had not returned to the Castle; the room was therefore watched. About midnight, as I had anticipated, Mahammed returned. He entered

from a sliding panel in the wall of his room. Satisfied, apparently, that no one had been there during his absence, he quickly removed the loose board, extracted the parcel, replaced the board, and disappeared through the wall. I did not at the time attempt to follow him, my object being to capture the whole gang. Subsequent investigation, however, showed me that the panel, through which Mahammed disappeared, leads to a secret staircase and a passage which has an exit some distance off in the Castle grounds."

"What a pity you did not take the man red-handed," interrupted Flügelbrecher.

"An ordinary detective, sir," said Mr. Homes, with dignity, "would have done that: I know what I am about."

"I know you have allowed this villain to escape, and Miss Lindsay to be kept a prisoner meanwhile," answered Flügelbrecher, wrathfully.

"On discovering that package," continued the detective, disregarding the interruption, "I telegraphed to Scotland Yard. By this time it is to be hoped that both Mahammed and Sir Southdown Evel are under arrest!"

"Sir Southdown Evel?" exclaimed the Duchesse, aghast. "Surely not my delightful friend, Sir Southdown, whom I met in the Tyrol?"

"Madame," said Mr. Homes, "the jewels were addressed to a man who passes himself off as Sir Southdown Evel, whom we have long been endeavouring to trace for a criminal offence which happened in Scotland some time ago. His capture is more important to the authorities even than Mahammed's." Then, bowing to Gertrude, he added, "I am gratified to have been the means of clearing Miss Lindsay's name and establishing her innocence."

"Which I, for one, never for a moment doubted," cried Flügelbrecher, drawing Gertrude towards him.

"The knowledge of your belief in me was my one hope, my one comfort," replied Gertrude, affectionately.

John Lindsay hung his head. He was now heartily ashamed of having doubted, for a moment, his sister's innocence; yet the somnambulistic theory was a very plausible one.

At this moment a telegram arrived for Mr. Homes.

"Quick!" cried Mrs. Mackay. "I know what that telegram contains. The thieves have been captured, and the treasure is safe. Oh, Mr. Homes, how clever you are!" and there was general applause as the Duchesse sang a few bars of a well-known melody, altering the words to "Homes, sweet Homes."

The detective read the telegram with an inscrutable countenance. "It is as follows," he said: "Mahammed, on way to London, disappeared from train, and escaped."

Everyone gasped.

"The villain!" cried Flügelbrecher. "He deserves hanging. Will he not be caught?"

"Oh, Mr. Homes, you are not so clever as we thought," remarked Monsieur von Hammertitszki.

The detective looked unperturbed. "Exactly what I foresaw," he said, calmly. "Madame, your jewels will be here in twenty-four hours."

"My dear Mr. Shamrock Homes," said the Duchesse, extending her hand to him, "I feel as though they were here already. And now let us go to luncheon; I am ravenously hungry. Excitement, or no excitement, I must have regular meals, or I shall collapse and lose my voice!"

"That would be a universal calamity," said Hammertitszki, tenderly.

"My dear Monsieur, your arm," said Madame, in reply. "Mr. Flügelbrecher, you will escort Gertrude. Mrs. Mackay, your children will take *you* in. And John, you need not look so mournful, I have a surprise for you. A little French lady arrived in the Castle not long ago. She is dying to see you; but, you know, even if a woman be dying, she must first attend to her toilette; and French girls take longer than our English maidens do to arrange their hair!"

Madame then drew aside the curtain of the adjoining room and beckoned.

"What! Henriette?" cried John, beaming, as the little brunette came tripping merrily in. "How long have you been here?"

"Five, ten minutes, *à peu près*, dearest John. But I had to take off my hat, you know, before I could let myself be seen by you."

"Those big hats *are* awkward," remarked Hammertitszki slily to Madame.

"In the theatre, sometimes," said Madame. "But they look very pretty."

"They are awkward in other places sometimes," added Hammertitszki, as the party trooped off to luncheon.

I saw the look exchanged between them, and thought that I, although regarded by human beings as 'only' a piano, could interpret it aright.

XXI

MAHAMMED'S IDENTITY

BY A. H. MANN,
(Mus. Doc. Cantab., King's College, Cambridge)

THEY were a considerable time over luncheon. I could not catch the conversation in the dining-room because Scarlatti was on my keys and practising, but I could hear peals of laughter from time to time, showing that the guests had recovered from the solemnity which had reigned in the Duchesse's boudoir. They had evidently settled a great many matters during that luncheon, for, when they came back, and Scarlatti sprang to the ground, they all seemed very excited. Gertrude and Henriette were both protesting that 'three weeks was not nearly time enough to prepare everything.' To this the Duchesse answered, "But, my dears, you are both staying at the Castle, and everything can easily be prepared from here. I insist upon paying all expenses. There must be a huge breakfast, and merry-making must be kept up during the whole day by my neighbours, tenants, and servants. Nothing shall eclipse the excitement we shall have at Blue Rock Castle. It will be exactly as they used to do in bye-gone days when they attended those wonderful and never-to-be-forgotten 'Conferences.'"

"You are very generous and kind, Duchesse, but——"

Gertrude began, when it suddenly dawned upon the party that Mr. Shamrock Homes, the detective, stood in their midst with another telegram in his hand.

"Well, what has become of Mahammed?" inquired Madame. "Your last news was that he had escaped from the train as you had foreseen he would."

"This fresh telegram informs me," said Mr. Homes, laconically, "that Mahammed has met Sir Southdown Evel at the address to which the packet was directed, that Mahammed is no longer black——"

"No longer black?" repeated the Duchesse. "Surely he was an Indian?"

"I foresaw this," calmly replied Mr. Homes. "Directly I met your servant, Madame, I perceived by the whites of his finger-nails that he was no more an Indian than I am."

"How appearances deceive!" cried the Duchesse. "But what further news have you?"

"Both men have been arrested," said Mr. Homes, "but . . . ."

"But what?" asked everybody.

"The jewels were not to be found."

"There now!" cried Flügelbrecher, "I knew you would over-reach yourself. These detective theories are all very well when they succeed, but, when they fail, they are idiotic."

Mr. Homes smiled cynically. "My dear sir," he said, quietly, "the worst of you amateur theorists is that you are too premature, too previous, too given to jump at conclusions. You are like the clever musical amateur who condemns all consecutive fifths and octaves at once whenever he sees them, unmindful that up all Macfarrenish or Proutean theoretical sleeves there are peculiar arguments, never previously heard or thought

of, which at once knock down the ignorant, mystify the learned, and convince nobody, not even their authors."

"Don't aggravate him, Mr. Homes," said the Duchesse. "Put us out of our suspense at once if you have any further news."

"Perhaps I should not state a mere supposition," replied the detective, humming meditatively something he would have called a melody, but to most people it would have sounded like the drone of a bagpipe.

"Never mind, let us have it, quick! quick!" cried Gertrude, who could not bear these interludes.

"Ladies and gentlemen, it is surmised," said Mr. Homes, "that Mahammed threw, over a river bridge, the packet containing the jewels, at the same time that he threw out of the railway window his bright blue and silver livery, which performed, in its legato descent, a wonderful glissando curve. He evidently was afraid he was being watched, as the fact of the package being addressed to 19 Berners Street showed that he first intended it to be carried to London and delivered by hand. Nevertheless, Mahammed is too cunning to have normally pitched a valuable parcel into any stream without providing for something to indicate its position. In such cases the usual plan is to attach a string, with a cork at the end, which floats on the surface of the stream, so that the package can be picked up afterwards."

"Are you sure, quite sure, that the jewels will be recovered now?" asked Flügelbrecher.

"I am never sure of anything until I see it," replied Mr Homes, testily.

"Oh, Madame, I am so sorry!" cried Gertrude. "It is a great pity! You will not be able to wear your diamonds at the performance of the Great Motet—I mean, at the great occasion."

Madame smiled complacently. "Perhaps I shall, after all," she said.

"But how can you, if they are lost in the stream?" asked Mrs. Mackay.

"Or are enjoying 'a life on ze ocean vaves'?" added Flügelbrecher.

"I think the time has come when I really ought to tell you," answered the Duchesse, and then she began to laugh. "I may tell them, mayn't I, Mr. Homes?"

"What are you tittering at?" remarked John Lindsay. "Surely this is a very serious matter."

At this, the Duchesse was literally convulsed with laughter, and her admirer, Monsieur von Hammertitszki, not knowing the cause, joined in.

"Ho! ho! I cannot help laughing," gasped the Duchesse, "when I think, ah! ah! of such clever thieves being taken in!" Then she became grave. "But I have to thank Mr. Homes," she added, "or I really should have lost my priceless jewels. He heard there was a plot on foot to rob me of them. He called on me, personating a clerk from my lawyers. Consequently, I had duplicate sets made, in paste, of my most valuable gems; and my other trinkets were copied in white metal, gilt. These were substituted and exhibited, the real jewels being taken charge of by my bankers. Visitors to Blue Rock Castle have latterly seen nothing but sham sets. Under the electric light the imitations looked quite as pretty as the genuine ones. When Gertrude was accused of the theft, and the evidence against her was so conclusive, I need not say that I was very much shocked. I could not believe it, and it made me feel quite ill."

"Vhat! You allowed Gertrude to be charged viz stealing your real jewels, ven you knew zat only

sham ones had been taken?" cried Flügelbrecher, aghast.

"Well, you see," Madame explained, uneasily, "Mr. Strong, I mean Mr. Shamrock Homes, pointed out to me that a theft was a theft, whether the articles taken were of little or great value; and his object was to capture the thieves at all costs."

"Zat is no excuse," cried Flügelbrecher. "You wished for *réclame* at all costs, at ze price even of ze fair name of my future wife. Duchesse, it vas vicked, it vas cruel and vile of you!"

"It is you who are cruel to me!" exclaimed Madame, looking very white. "All I could do to spare Gertrude I did," she protested; "but even John Lindsay, her own brother, thought her guilty. I was acting under the advice of a famous detective, who declared that the evidence against Gertrude was overwhelming, and that the only chance there was of capturing the real thief was to put my own feelings aside and treat Gertrude as the criminal until she was proved innocent. I did this, I can assure you, against my own wishes, and no one is better pleased than I am if the real culprit has been trapped. It is now my one wish to make Gertrude all the reparation in my power."

"You cannot make reparation," growled Flügelbrecher, surlily.

"Heinrich," cried Gertrude, "you don't know the Duchesse if you say that."

The Duchesse looked up. "You have an idea, Gertrude?" she said. "I know you have forgiven me. Come over here and whisper."

Gertrude crossed the room, and said something in a low tone to the Duchesse, who at once cried, "How clever of you! Excellent! Excellent! The very thing!"

Hand in hand both ladies then came forward to the pianist, Flügelbrecher, whose rage with the Duchesse had not yet abated.

"What piano, in the whole world," asked the Duchesse in her most bewitching manner, "do you like best, Herr Flügelbrecher?"

"Vhat a question to ask!" he said. "Zat piano over zere," and he turned to me, "is ze finest instrument" ("Without a crank," growled Hammertitszki) "I ever put my hands on. It is not so fine, berhaps, as it vas vhen quite new, but it is so associated vid ze joys and griefs of my life zat I prefer it, even now, to any other piano."

"Gertrude wishes you to accept that good friend from me, as a present," said the Duchesse.

"But, Duchesse, vhy? Zis is too generous," said Flügelbrecher, somewhat puzzled, but smiling brightly.

"You will take it, won't you?" pleaded Gertrude.

"I vill do anything you vish, darling," replied her lover.

"But you will do something for me as well?" added the Duchesse.

"Yes, certainly, Duchesse. Forgive me,—I vas too hasty—of course I vill," answered Flügelbrecher, half apologising for his rough behaviour.

"Thank you," said the Duchesse. "Then that is settled."

"Vat is settled?" inquired Flügelbrecher.

"It gives me an opportunity of fulfilling one of the dearest wishes of your life, although you won't guess what it is. It seems to me that the only way I can make reparation to Gertrude is through you, whom she loves bettèr than herself. The dearest wish of your life, she has told me more than once, is to play before

the Queen. You know that I am commanded to sing at Windsor next week. A certain great pianist, who was to have appeared at the same time, has been taken ill, and I have to-day received a letter from Her Majesty's Private Secretary requesting me to nominate a substitute. My dear friend, Vladimir," she said,turning to Monsieur von Hammertitszki, "desires that you shall play, and I have already made arrangements for your favourite piano to be packed and sent by rail to Windsor."

"Gertrude! Gertrude! Vat shall I zay? Zis is too kind!" cried Flügelbrecher. "Ze reparation was to be made to you, and not to me."

"It is made to me, dear, if it is done through you," replied Gertrude.

And then the lovers went over to Madame, who kissed Gertrude and shook Flügelbrecher by both hands.

There was a general murmur of applause from the others who were present, for it was evident that, with her usual tact, Madame had done the only possible thing to make the irascible Flügelbrecher thoroughly pleased.

"Who do you think is the real thief?" Mr. Homes asked, suddenly, in his dry voice.

"Mahammed, of course," cried everybody.

"Yes, but who is Mahammed?" demanded Homes.

"Some picturesque Indian Thug, no doubt," surmised Madame. "I can't quite believe, yet, that he is not an Indian. Those Indians are so cunning."

Mr. Homes took no notice of the great singer; he merely went on where he had left off.

"The police have at last captured the murderer of Angus Mackay, the notorious . . . . Klug."

Mrs. Mackay fainted, to appropriate music, for Scarlatti had, at that moment, dumped himself down on my keyboard.

XXII

THE FINGER OF FATE

BY HARVEY LÖHR

MRS. MACKAY had fainted. This was not to be wondered at. The mention of the name of her husband's murderer seemed to bring back all the misery she had endured at the time of his death, and overwhelm her. How terribly hateful the name of that man was to her! Until that wretch had blighted her life, she had been the happiest woman on earth. After the mischief he had wrought, she had become one of the most miserable of widows. Surely that alone should have satisfied his vindictiveness. Nevertheless, the man who, through his drunkenness and villainy, had brought so much suffering and mourning upon her, seemed to have dogged her footsteps. First, as concert agent, he had embezzled her husband's money. Under an assumed name, as Director of the Bogus College of Music, Limited, Klug had given instructions for the surgical operation which had maimed her hand and spoilt for ever her pianoforte-playing. It was he, also, who had been the means of her sister losing her beautiful voice. It was he, moreover, who, as Mahammed, the Duchesse's black servant, had brought additional misery upon her through injur-

ing the good name of her sister, Gertrude Lindsay. The other wickednesses he had been guilty of would take too long to catalogue here. Klug, indeed, was a clever villain.

To foil a clever villain requires an aptitude, shrewdness, and ability superior even to that possessed by the villain himself. Mr. Shamrock Homes was nothing if not shrewd. He was a genius in tracking criminals. Inquisitive people, who tried to extract information from Mr. Homes, which he did not choose to disclose, were invariably put on the wrong scent. As has been related, he 'surmised'—in reply to a question from the Duchesse—that Mahammed had thrown the packet containing the jewels into a river, that Mahammed had met his confederate, Sir Southdown Evel, and that both had already been arrested. That, however, was simply a surmise invented on the spur of the moment, and was the reverse of fact. It was scarcely likely that Mr. Homes would divulge prematurely any important communication to such an inveterate gossip as was the Duchesse.

Had he chosen, he might have vouchsafed much interesting information. He might have mentioned that, whilst searching Mahammed's room at Blue Rock Castle, he had accidentally discovered a post card addressed to the Duchesse. It appeared to be a memorandum from a voice-specialist, and with these so-called voxo-metric revelations the great singer was pestered. Every teacher of singing advocating a peculiar method of voice-production sent her his circulars, and the fact that this card had been intercepted by Mahammed was therefore not remarkable. Yet Mr. Homes studied that post card very carefully. Anybody else might have thrown it away. As it lay

on my top, I can quote what was written on it, for we pianos have good memories and never forget—which fact shows our superiority over most pianists. The post card was worded as follows:—

"ADORABLE MADAM! Go in for clavicular breathing by raising and depressing the shoulders nine times every morning on waking. Expand chest with dumb-bells forty times, then gargle the mouth. In horizontal position, throat should form species of tunnel between diaphragm and upper lungs—from north to south. If this induces heart-burn, jump with a skipping-rope and take magnesia. Practise the letter P, and sing such words as 'parcel' and 'proceed,' articulating the consonants definitely and vowels freely. Tone colour depends on diameter of the pharynx. Increasing span of upper part of larynx, a 'blue' effect—like low notes of hautboy—is produced. To do this, skill is required in use of the inner muscles of the larynx. Shall await an early reply and hope not to be kept waiting. With profound regards.

C. L."

The writing on the card was here and there very cramped, a fact which first aroused the suspicions of Mr. Homes. He read the memorandum aloud, he rehearsed the instructions before a glass, he photographed the card, to see if there was any chemical writing on its surface, he tried various ciphers he possessed. His labour was in vain. He could not arrive at the hidden meaning he was convinced the message contained.

Wandering through the Castle grounds, puzzling out the enigma, Mr. Homes one morning picked up a tradesman's business card which was perforated in a peculiar manner. He was overjoyed. Adjusting the perforated card over the writing, he seemed nevertheless no nearer a solution. At last, reversing the perforated card,

he found the key he had been searching for. The writing, visible, then ran :—"Go . . . . . by . . . . . nine . . . . . forty . . . . . mouth . . . . . tunnel . . . . . south . . . . . burn . . . . . jump . . . . . take . . . . . parcel . . . . . proceed . . . . . blue . . . . . boy . . . . . inn . . . . . shall . . . . . be . . . . . waiting."

Even that message might have been meaningless to anyone except Mr. Homes. To him it revealed the contemplated movements of the gang. It showed that Klug's instructions were to *go by* the *nine-forty* train. On approaching the *mouth* of a *tunnel* on the line near the village of *Southburn*, on account of the steep gradient, the train would be obliged to slow down. This would render jumping off the train comparatively easy, and Klug's instructions were to *jump*. He was to *take* the *parcel* containing the *prima donna's* supposed jewels with him. Beyond the tunnel was a valley and an embankment, down which a path led to the village of Southburn. When, therefore, Mahammed alighted, he was to *proceed*—so the message ran—to the *Blue Boy Inn* close by, where, the writing informed him, Sir Southdown Evel and the other members of the gang *shall be waiting* to receive him and his spoil.

Now, it so happened that the day fixed by the gang for Mahammed's departure was the same as my departure by rail for the workshop of my old friend, Mr. Jolly, who had been instructed to overhaul me preparatory to my visit with Herr Flügelbrecher to Windsor Castle.

Coincidences such as these are not accidental. A mysterious power which ignorant human beings call Fate brings them about. The finger of Fate, as we shall see, was now pointing to the villain Klug, and when Fate marks its quarry, there is no escape. The

wretch was doomed. No matter how cleverly he might plan, his end was approaching. Had he penetrated as far as the North Pole, an iceberg would have crushed him. Had he fled to the Equator and sheltered himself in the temple of Karnak, one of its columns would have fallen on him, pushed by that relentless finger of Fate.

The reader may think it strange that I should have been sent to a local pianoforte-tuner, instead of to my manufacturer, before my advent at Windsor Castle. It will be remembered, however, that Mr. Jolly had assisted at my début in St. James's Hall, where he had frivolously played pitch-and-toss in the Artists' Room with the throaty young tenor, and had been fêted, much to my entertainment, whilst I was 'in hospital.' Apart from youthful frivolity, he was, nevertheless, a thoroughly competent tuner; and it had been Herr Flügelbrecher's particular wish that he should personally look me over.

Mr. Jeremiah Jolly, shortly after his marriage, had left the employment of my manufacturer, and had established himself in the village of Southburn, where he had purchased a small pianoforte shop. He did not sell many instruments, but had a good tuning connection —'constituency,' he called it. A card in his window reminded the world that the new Philharmonic pitch was 'A 439'; that it was the best pitch for singers and instrumentalists alike.

At Blue Rock Castle Mr. Jolly superintended my packing, and I was placed in an iron-bound case which had been made for me when I travelled with Sir John Meyer to the East. It was fortunate that the case was a specially strong one and that I was wedged in very tightly, as the reader will presently learn.

A439

I was despatched from Blue Rock Castle by goods train, and, on the arrival of the train at Southburn, the truck I was on was uncoupled, and shunted into a siding to wait until a cart should be sent for me.

The siding was near the mouth of the tunnel and at the very edge of the embankment, the depth of which, at that spot, was close on fifty feet to the bottom of the valley. In front of me, in the valley, was the little village of Southburn, containing Mr. Jolly's music shop, nestling cosily amongst the trees.

It was a peaceful scene for one to contemplate. Nature here seemed in complete accord with my present mood, as I mused quietly in my iron-bound box, untroubled by the discord of events awaiting development. It was a perfect symphony, with few episodes to distract one, save that a merry lark, trilling his chant, rose to so high a pitch in his flight towards the old Sol far away in the sky, as to unduly increase the tension of my thoughts. But this was merely temporary. I gradually lost consciousness, lulled to sleep by the murmuring song of the little brook in a key which locked up all my meditations in oblivion.

How long I remained in that reverie I do not know, but I was presently aroused by strange sounds and a creeping sensation of impending danger, so that my very sound-board trembled with emotion, and my detached pedals twitched with unaccountable excitement. I was now wide awake. I listened intently. That sound—could it be? In the dull roar of the train approaching through the tunnel, I recognised the mighty, rock-bottom, fundamental tone of the true pitch of Nature—'A 439'—which I had once before heard in Niagara Falls when touring in the States.

As the train neared the mouth of the tunnel and

approached the embankment, it slowed down, and that deep, far-away, fundamental tone was lost in the shrill, upper-partial shriek of a whistle near at hand.

The sun was in front of me, and I could, therefore, see some little way into the tunnel. I could observe, as the speed of the train slackened, a figure of a man grasping one of the handles of a carriage door.

Presently the man, who carried a parcel wrapped up in the light blue cover of a current number of the *Monthly Journal*, sprang from the foot-board. He jumped, unnoticed, off the train. Everything was no doubt resolving itself as Mr. Homes, with his marvellous astuteness, had foreseen. Yet, who was this man? My first thought was — Klug, but a glance at his face dispelled that idea.

The confederates, however, had been too impatient to wait at their meeting-place, and, as this man appeared, they met him by the embankment. There were five of them altogether. It was evident that something had alarmed them. Listening, I heard one of them say that several plain clothes' constables were coming to the Blue Boy Inn by the next train, and that would give no time to remove the goods they had there.

"Upset their apple-cart then!" counselled the man who had jumped from the train.

By his appearance I had failed to recognise him, but I knew that voice! It was indeed Klug! He had changed his clothes in the train, and disguised himself like a young man.

"A good idea!" laughed the gang, who imm diately proceeded to pile heavy obstacles across the railway line so as to wreck the coming train which was to bring the constables.

Fortunately, however, the gang miscalculated. The train was preceded by a pilot engine. Scarcely had the obstacles been placed in position, when there came, whirling along, a solitary heavy locomotive, not a *leit motiv*—I wish it had been. Too late to stop the engine, the driver and stoker saved themselves by jumping off, and left the rest to Fate. This is what Fate did.

On reaching the embankment, at the spot where the obstruction was, and near where I waited in the siding, the heavy engine crashed into the barrier and reared forward violently, while some of its machinery whirled round at terrific speed. What happened then I scarcely remember. There was an explosion. I suppose the boiler burst; at all events, I, in my heavy packing-case, weighing about a ton and a half, was shot into the air like a shell from a mortar. Evidently the hand of Fate did not use its third, or weakest, finger with which to impel me upward. Then I was conscious that I had turned over *volta subito*, and was falling many octaves into the valley below.

It took me, perhaps, five seconds to fall; but in that breve time, which seemed triple at the moment, I automatically played through Bach's 'Chromatic Fantasia,' together with a 'Liszt Rhapsody' forming a counterpoint. With a violent thud, that sent my iron frame quavering, I canoned off the grassy embankment, and finally landed in Purcell's Ground, a waste plot, of which the ownership is still unclaimed, the copyhold —or copyright, as it is sometimes called—having been lost.

The spot where I struck the ground was fortunately very piano—I mean soft—but, as I finally rolled over in contrary motion, my fears were augmented by hearing

an agonised shriek as of a *vox humana.* "Great Bach!" I yelled, "is that the resolution of the Lost Chord?" There was then a gentle upheaving, and all was still.

I lay helplessly on the ground, bruised and aching, and feeling all in lumps like a Janko keyboard, yet thankful for the pause. For a while I was hysterical; and, as I gazed on the scene, said to myself, "What a lovely place for an English Bayreuth!" Then I burst into song, and warbled, "O! that we two were maying!" After that I became calmer.

Presently I felt that there was something underneath me—a sort of lump. What was that something? Was it Scarlatti? Was the resolution of the Lost Chord its last feline caterwaul? Whatever the thing was, I had crushed it, even as a Nasmyth hammer would flatten a fly—at least, I imagined so.

An hour passed before the train conveying the plain clothes' constables arrived, together with men sent down to clear the line. I learnt that Homes's plans had succeeded, and he had captured the entire gang, except one man. That one man was Klug. Where was he? Nobody knew. Both he and his parcel had mysteriously vanished.

It was only when the platelayers got their levers and began to raise me up, that the death of Klug was conjectured. He, or somebody else, must have been hurrying down the embankment when the locomotive burst, and the finger of Fate sent me hurtling through the air. I can imagine the agony of mind of such a person when he saw me boomeranging erratically down the slope, and his uncertainty as to which way to dodge. It was, then, the syncopated shriek of that person which I had heard as I reached the foot of the embankment.

When they got it out (the person, not the shriek), it

was a ghastly sight, more horrible, even, than the Bayreuth dragon. My immense weight, falling on some human being, had crushed in his skull, broken every consecutive fifth bone in his body, and had driven the bleeding mass deep down into the mud. Ugh! Smashed and mangled, and with clothes soiled and torn beyond recognition, a hideous Something was extricated *poco a poco*, in gruesome fragments, bit by bit, and was carried off on a stretcher, composed of staves braced together, to await an inquest.

The jury, who held the inquest in Mr. Jolly's shop, said the sickening spectacle was not a man, and never had been. They swore it could not be Klug, and disputed with the doctor. It might have been anybody, or anything, so utterly unlike a human being were those horrible *morçeaux* and bagatelles of humanity. Moreover, on an examination of my packing-case, Mr. Shamrock Homes discovered that the base was figured, in some mysterious manner, with the profile of Klug. This had obviously been drawn by the finger of Fate, and was circumstantial evidence of the identity of the remains. Relieved of my case, by the *power of sound* I exclaimed, "That 'Spohr Klug."

But deep down, deeper than the hole made by the crushed corpse in the soft earth, was the *Monthly Journal*—no longer blue, but of crushed strawberry hue —which Klug had carried. Of course this was a further means of identification.

So the jewels were recovered. The diamond necklace was, however, only a duplicate in paste. The Duchesse, as related, had deposited the real diamonds, presented by the Emperor of Russia, at the Bank. Imitation, therefore, has its value, especially when fugally inclined.

Fate had made me the instrument to avenge Klug's many wickednesses. Yet I felt neither triumph nor misgiving in having crushed the wretch. I felt, indeed, that I had done him a service, because, through me, the villain had escaped the degradation of the gallows.

As regards myself, my condition, after having been flung down a railway embankment a distance of nearly fifty feet, may be imagined. Mr. Jolly wept when he saw my packing-case covered with mud, and, also—the writer does not wish to harrow the feelings of the reader, but one must add—with the Ruddigore of my arch enemy, the now dead Klug; it was enough to Sully-vun's appearance.

When I was unpacked, it was expected that I should be found a hopeless wreck. Mr. Jolly was agreeably surprised, and I myself was delighted. Wonderful to relate, I had been so well and strongly packed, that I had sustained little or no injury, as the ground was soft, and my descent had been retarded at more than one point. Two or three strings were broken, a dozen hammer-shanks were dislocated—that was all. Even the Janko lumps had disappeared. My packing-case—covered with mud and blood—after being inspected by the coroner and jury, was solemnly burnt, during which ceremony a local brass band, whose conductor wore a beautiful pea-green hood bestowed by the late Bogus College, performed Handel's 'Dead March' in quick-step time.

On being installed in Mr. Jolly's music shop, he looked me over very carefully. I was regulated, tuned, cleaned out, and polished. After that I was placed in the village school-room on show, arrayed with a magnificent table-cover, on which were worked the autographs of several hundred famous musicians, who had

testified, in the usual unbiassed style, their appreciation of the handiwork of my manufacturers, and I was visited by hundreds of people who had heard about me in the newspapers.

I was now left to stand in a temperature of sixty-eight degrees Fahrenheit, until the day when I should be required at the Castle. After the dreadful experience I had undergone, I need not say that I was thankful for this respite—this chance of 'settling down' again before the most glorious event in my career—my appearance before the Queen—should take place.

XXIII

THE TOUCH OF A SOVEREIGN HAND

BY THE COMTESSE DE BRÉMONT
(Author of the "World of Music")

IN Mr. Jolly's shop I cogitated in silence, at first dismally and then joyfully.

My sounding-board beat in three-four time through delight, when I recalled how the Duchesse had declared her intention of restoring me to my former master—the world-famous Flügelbrecher.

I must confess that, unhurt as I had been by falling fifty feet, my very susceptible sounding-board had almost failed me when the charming Duchesse had put to Herr Flügelbrecher that momentous question, "What piano in the world do you like best?"

"I had felt my legs tremble," to use a favourite expression of my two-legged friends. I had felt them tremble and creak in my anxiety. *I*, who had heretofore been the most docile and uncomplaining of instruments, who had borne without a crack or misplacement all the vicissitudes of fortune, the miseries of being out of tune, out on hire, the risks of draughts, braved the dangers of wreckage and fire through my numerous journeys, the torture of being played upon by unskilful hands—all these experiences had sunk into insignificance before the flood of jealousy that had sent

my temperature far above that required for concert pitch; I had held the entire breath of my seven and a quarter octaves' compass to catch Herr Flügelbrecher's answer. When it came, in those well-known tones, gruff but kind, "Vhat biano but zat one?" pointing to me, my relief had only been equalled by my joy in knowing that I was to be, henceforth, the property of my beloved master.

Verily! that had been a day of emotions. When the Duchesse had gone on to tell Herr Flügelbrecher that she desired him to play her accompaniments and some solos at the forthcoming concert for the Queen, and when I realised that I was to be conveyed to Windsor, my strings and sound-board, rebelling under the pressure of my dampers, had straightway begun beating *prestissimo* in six-eight time, with syncopated accent, through pride over the triumph awaiting me.

But there is a limit even to the emotions of a piano, and I had been glad to hear I was to have a period of rest in the establishment of Mr. Jolly during my master's honeymoon. After the tragedy in the last chapter, I had been undergoing a process of recuperative tuning, that would make me settle down truly to my normal pitch of 'A 439.'

To my surprise, I found I had, one morning, for companion in Mr. Jolly's shop a pretty pianette. Surely I had seen the dear little thing before? Yes, it was the 'A454' I had fallen in *pianissimo* love with at the factory where I was made, as I have already related. Strange to say, it had been also sent by the Duchesse to undergo similar treatment to myself. From the influence of its surroundings, I soon found that my little friend had become a gossiping chatterbox. It had occupied a corner in the boudoir of the Duchesse

before my advent at the Castle. Gertrude had condemned it as unsatisfactory, and I had usurped its position. It had then been placed in the inner room, and used mostly for strumming out the notes of the music in the memorising process by which the Duchesse learnt her rôles. Being neglected, it was usually left open, and had been, thereby, free to hear and see all that had taken place—an opportunity the little instrument profited by on every occasion, to judge by the string of gossip it unrolled for my benefit.

"Oh, there you are!" tinkled the pianette in that falsetto jangle peculiar to its kind. "I'm ripping glad to see you again! I've heard so much about you—and you *are* a fine-looking instrument, and as handsome as ever!" (My polish blushed with pride.) "I hear you are going to be played before the Queen. My! but that is jolly! Yet, I don't envy you, not a bit. I'd be frightened to death—after what you have experienced—to make such a long journey; my pretty mistress is Queen enough for me, although she turned me out when you came. I'd rather help teach her to sing, as I do—since she learns everything now with *my* aid—than play before all the other Queens in the world. There are lots of ordinary Queens, but there is only one Queen of Song—and that's my mistress, Madame La Duchesse de Cherrystones."

I made no reply to this frivolous and somewhat impertinent speech. Nothing daunted by my dignified silence, the pianette rattled on :—

"Never, in all my time, have we had such gay doings at Blue Rock Castle. I am so glad to find you at last again, for it is long since we met at the factory, and I fear I have aged sadly."

"Not a bit," I interpolated gallantly, if untruly.

"I am just dying to tell somebody all about the three weddings," continued the pianette.

"Three weddings?" my sounding-board involuntarily echoed.

"Yes, three weddings," chirped the pianette, "and one of the happy bridegrooms was your master, Herr Flügelbrecher."

For a moment a pang of jealousy set the covering of my biggest bass string buzzing like a wasp.

"There! I knew that would move you," quoth the pianette, with a compound click from its mechanism, suspiciously resembling a laugh.

"Herr Flügelbrecher married!" I thought; then I was no longer first in his affections. Oh, the anguish of that revelation! My soft pedal—the seat of my affections—drooped so low, that all the skill of Mr. Jolly would have been unable to raise it again, had not the little gossip at my side continued with a gusto that rattled all its pallid keys.

"Yes! Herr Flügelbrecher was married to Miss Lindsay!"

"To Gertrude Lindsay?" I interpolated, in relieved tones, as I thought of the peerless beauty and the heroine of this autobiography. "This is good news, but I expected it." The rebound in my feelings, however, increased the pressure on my bridge.

I begged my entertaining little neighbour to continue what was now a very interesting narrative to me.

"The Duchesse married the great Russian pianist, Monsieur Vladimir Alexandrowitch von Hammertitszki."

Here the pianette paused for lack of breath, its sounding-board being too small to sustain the tone necessary to say all this at once. I was upon the

point of coming to its assistance, by lowering my damper pedal, when it resumed, with a plaintive twang of its overwrought strings :—

"Oh, dear! why does that Russian have such a long-drawn-out name? It makes one wish to be a wind instrument. Now that I have recovered my breath, I am happy to tell you that the third wedding was that of Mr. John Lindsay, Mus. Bac., the clever organist, and Mademoiselle Henriette D'Annoy. There! Is that news enough for you?"

"By no means," I answered; "I guessed that already. Tell me about the weddings, and *all* the other things."

"I cannot give you a description of the weddings, for I was not at the church; but, before the ceremony, I heard the bells in the steeple ring out a 'triple-bob-major' very appropriately, in jubilation over the triple matrimonial alliance."

I listened with the keenest interest to the little instrument's disclosures of what it had heard and seen in the boudoir of the Duchesse.

"Of course I knew my mistress would marry that man with the nasty pipe, the long hair, and still longer name," said the pianette, confidentially.

"I was restored to my rightful corner in the boudoir as soon as you were taken away, and was therefore in a position to be in the secret of their courtship as much as you had been.

"The Duchesse did not mind me in the least, but I don't think he of the long name liked me any too much. He rather resented my presence, as he called me a toy, and often shut me up abruptly, thinking, no doubt, of you."

"He liked me," I could not help remarking.

"However," went on the pianette, "I was treated to

a full account of all the plans for the ceremony, and beheld much of the preparations in the way of gowns and fineries to be worn by the three bridesmaids.

"Your favourite, the peerless Gertrude, said she had undergone so much trouble that she preferred being married without fuss from her father's quiet little church."

"Just like *my* Gertrude," I murmured, *appoggiatura.*

"The Duchesse, having an eye to effect," continued the pianette *sostenuto*, "would not entertain such an idea for a moment. Of course neither Gertrude nor Henriette liked their marriages being hurried on. Three weeks, they declared, was not time enough to prepare.

"Money, however, works wonders. The Duchesse insisted on paying expenses. All objections being thereby removed, preparations were rapidly pushed forward, Mrs. Mackay superintending the dressmaking arrangements.

"These were mostly discussed in the boudoir, and I had, therefore, full information of everything, as well as the fun of being entertained by the display of millinery in the way of satins and laces.

"I heard it declared repeatedly that Mrs. Mackay had perfectly exquisite taste, and I should think she found that an easy thing to have, considering that the Duchesse spared no expense.

"Everything was of the most rich and gorgeous order. I was quite dazzled by the display of satins and brocades brought for the approval of Mrs. Mackay and the Duchesse and the two other prospective brides. I was initiated into the mysteries of court-trains, and soon grew to discriminate between a flounce and a frill. I could now give lessons myself on the art of

cutting a gore, adjusting a pleat, and 'gathering' a petticoat.

"I learnt to distinguish between chiffon and tulle, *crêpe-de-chine* and Japanese silk.

"I received an education in the manipulation of gold embroidery, spangles, sequins, paillettes, and jewelled passementerie as trimmings, that would be invaluable to an ordinary dressmaker—a word, by the way, I heard Mrs. Mackay declare was too old-fashioned now-a-days, '*modiste*,' she said, being the proper title.

"Then I discovered how to 'build' a gown on the tailor-made plan. In brief, I never learned so much in all my life about women and their arts of being beautiful, as I did in those few days after you left.

"I used to think we pianos were hard worked, but, I assure you, we endure none of the drudgery that goes to make up the united labour bestowed on one gown."

I let my gossipping little companion rattle on *ad libitum*; for, to tell the truth, I was highly interested in all this information of a subject so new to me.

I let my fancy wander amid recollections of certain *prime donne* who had assisted at my master's concerts; and now I began to understand, for the first time, the nature and construction of some of the wonderful creations of silk and satin they wore in the way of gowns. Never before did I realise how much it took to *make* a woman!

Lost in these reflections, I scarcely heard any of my little neighbour's prattle, until its description of the brides brought my attention to order. Its little voice was chattering away, *à la fugue furioso*, with enthusiasm.

"Yes! it was a truly lovely picture," it exclaimed, "that of those three beautiful women arrayed in their bridal robes of shimmering satin, gleaming with the soft radiance of pearls and gold embroidery, glistening with spangles, and sparkling with jewels! Verily, it was a Vision Splendid."

The little pianette paused, out of inability to continue. My hammer felts had been wool-gathering, and I was now much concerned to hear every particle of news, but I feared to strain the tiny instrument's bracings—in other words, to hurt its feelings, by admitting my abstraction. Therefore I murmured, in my most vibrant tone, as though much overcome :—

"Beautiful! my little friend. What you have related is very beautiful, so beautiful that I should like to hear it again. I pray you, *da capo, encore.*"

Like many small things, the pianette possessed an inordinate vanity. Much flattered by my apparent appreciation, it jerked up its dampers and gave a curious kind of 'Purr' like that a bad singer makes when afflicted with a chronic habit of clearing the throat. Then my friend rattled away *con brio.*

"The three brides met in my mistress's boudoir on the morning of the triple wedding. Theirs was a display of beauty worthy of the most exacting eyes of gods and men!

"My mistress was robed in a symphony of shimmering satin and lace, and the boudoir was scarcely large enough to hold her train of gorgeous gold-embroidered brocade. I felt the material swirl around my columns (or what you grand pianos vulgarly call legs). The contact of the soft silk sent the most delicious thrill of ecstatic rapture through my case. If there had not been such a chatter of feminine voices, I am sure my

delight would have been audible in spite of my dampers.

"A great cloud of flimsy tulle enveloped the head and shoulders of my mistress.

"It crept in vapoury folds—even as the fleecy cloud seems to kiss an avalanche of Alpine snow (when did I hear that?)—down to the edge of that wonderful train. Through this cloud-like veil, the diamonds adorning the Duchesse's beautiful neck and bosom twinkled mistily. Her dark tresses and glorious eyes took on a new loveliness under the chaste sheen of that fairy-like bridal veil! Truly, the Duchesse, my adorable mistress, was the Queen of Brides!"

Seized with a fear that my little friend would go on in this enthusiastic and poetical strain, describing the Duchesse, for a week, I grew impatient to hear something of my own heroine's bridal finery, and pulled the pianette up short by exclaiming,

"The Duchesse is *always* superb, but do let me hear a word of praise about my beloved Gertrude!"

"Certainly," jerked out the pianette, "I am coming to that. But wait till I have finished with the Duchesse."

"Under that veil of exquisite transparency, she carried a magnificent bouquet of white and gold-tinted orchids. The priceless blossoms fell in a shower of trailing vines to her tiny feet, clad in their satin and pearl embroidered slippers.

"Oh! the wondrous sunniness of those superb orchids relieved by the warmer dark green of the myrtle leaves! It was the perfect tone necessary to give the finishing touch to that symphony of satin, lace, and diamonds, enveloping my wonderful mistress, the Duchesse de Cherrystones!"

"Bravo!" I cried, "*Giusto e deciso.*" The pianette,

taking the hint, lapsed gracefully, *portamento*, into the following description of Gertrude :—

"Gertrude," it said, "was lovely; she was a rhapsody in white silk and chiffon, white silk embroidered all over in silver in a design of true-lover-knots, and chiffon glistening with spangles of pearl sequins.

"She wore a beautiful train, although it was not to be compared to that of the Duchesse in point of splendour and size. It was covered with the most lovely little paillettes of silver, and hung in soft, graceful folds from her shoulders, after the mode of many years ago, when fair dames were attired à la Watteau.

"You can imagine how charmingly this gown set off Gertrude's slender figure, and fair blondè beauty. She wore a wreath of lilies of the valley (the Duchesse would not permit her to wear the hackneyed orange blossom), a single row of pearls encircled her pretty throat, and she carried a shower bouquet of lilies of the valley and white violets.

"A delicate veil of white silk tulle like that of my mistress, covered Gertrude from head to foot, so that she was indeed a perfectly lovely picture of bride-like simplicity."

Despite a certain lack of enthusiasm in the voice of my little friend during this description of my beloved Gertrude's appearance, I was greatly pleased to hear how she was dressed, and perceived that Gertrude displayed more real taste in the matter of bridal finery than the Duchesse had done.

The character of each woman was most distinctly marked in this respect, Gertrude arraying her loveliness in a fashion befitting her prospects and station, whilst the Duchesse, with her usual love of show and pretence,

had been displaying herself in a costume fit to grace her nuptials with that Prince of the Piano, Mons. Vladimir Alexandrowitch von Hammertitszki.

"That pretty little Mademoiselle Henriette D'Annoy was a dainty picture," continued the pianette, not waiting to hear my criticism on the description of Gertrude. I half suspected that the diminutive instrument divined my thoughts, and gabbled along before I had time to give expression to the critical side of the subject.

"I would call Henriette's bridal gown a fantasie in frills," said the pianette with an unctuous internal twang. "A fantasie in frills aglow with an iridescent embroidery that reminded one of moonlight shining through an oriel of stained glass in a beautiful abbey."

"Really, my little friend," I interpolated, "you have a vivid, not to say fin-de-siècle imagination. Where have you learned all those very literary expressions?"

"I have not lived in the Duchesse's boudoir for nothing," snapped the pianette, letting fall its music desk with a clatter. "I have not been treated to a daily dose of Ouida and 'The Queen' fashion articles for nothing! This is the accepted and approved way of describing fashions."

Seeing that my friend was somewhat jarred and going out of tune, I hastened to apply a dose of flattery. Soon mollified, the pianette continued,

"I suppose it was owing to her French taste that Mademoiselle Henriette wore such a fascinating fantasy of frills—it was decidedly a Parisian creation, so I heard the Duchesse remark. The petticoat, or I should say skirt, to avoid any misunderstanding, was of heavy cream satin velours, as was likewise the train, which was longer than Gertrude's but not so long as that of

my mistress. This was a square train, however, and in each corner was a fleur-de-lis embroidered in those wonderful moonlight iridescent beads and sequins, the entire front of the skirt being one continuous wave of the most dainty frills de chiffon, spangled with the same scheme of iridescent sequins. And behold! these frills formed a fascinating finish to the train, and were repeated on the full bouffant bodice and long sleeves, in the way of tiny frills, the effect being indescribably lovely.

"Henriette's piquant style of beauty was further accentuated by the rich folds of a lovely veil of real Honiton lace, a gift of the bridegroom, as I heard my mistress say. This veil partially covered the bodice in front and hung half-way down the train. Henriette also wore a shower bouquet of lilies; but these were of the kind known as lilies of France. She wore no jewels, she did not need them. That rich Honiton lace veil was worth any ordinary jewellery—so the Duchesse declared!"

During the latter part of this interesting talk, there was more or less bustle in Mr. Jolly's music shop; and, just as I was about to remark something to my little friend on the subject of the Honiton lace veil, an abrupt end came to the conversation. Two men entered, lifted the pianette up, and bore it away into an inner room to be tuned.

This proceeding took us so by surprise that we had no time to say a farewell word, and I was left alone, and much discomfited over the loss of further information about the triple wedding.

With my usual luck, however, fate came to my assistance in the guise of Mr. Jolly's two shop ladies. These young women, had, no doubt, been discussing the same subject that had interested myself and the

pianette, for I heard them begin almost at the point of our interrupted conversation.

The noise in the shop had quieted down, save for occasional glissando groans from my little neighbour in the next room during the process of tuning, and I got the full benefit of the girls' chatter.

"I never saw three such grand weddings!" one of the young girls was saying, as she sorted the sheet music. "I have read of double weddings, but I never heard of triple weddings, much less did I ever dream I should see such an event."

"Oh! I am so sorry I was away on my holiday!" lamented the other, as she dusted a parcel of anthems. "Do tell me more."

The first speaker was the senior shop assistant. She paused in her work, and, leaning on the counter, proceeded to describe the entire wedding ceremony.

"On arriving at the altar rails, the Duchesse," she said, "took the central position. Her little pages, Romeo and Juliet, looked too lovely for anything. They were dressed exactly alike, dear, in rose-pink satin *Louis Quinze* costumes, and wore black velvet picture hats, with the most gorgeous pink ostrich plumes! They looked too lovely for words, and the important manner in which the darling mites held up the end of that magnificent train, was a sight not to be forgotten in a lifetime."

"Oh! do go on!" cried the listener, "this is just lovely."

"Hush! Miss Lindsay, as the youngest bride, entered first," continued the narrator, quietly.

"*Behold how good and joyful—Clark Whitfield,*" said the other girl, loudly, as she sorted the pile of anthems.

"She was followed by Mademoiselle D'Annoy, while

the Duchesse came last. She sailed up the aisle, looking Oh! as grand and magnificent as the Queen of Sheba, and as for her diamonds"——

"*Let your light so shine—Barnby*," interrupted the other assistant from her list—"they just dazzled the eyes of every woman in the church. Well, when the procession arrived at the altar rails, the Duchesse took the centre place, with Miss Lindsay and Herr Flügelbrecher on her right, and Mademoiselle Henriette D'Annoy and Mr. Lindsay on the left. Of course the service was fully choral. The whole ceremony was impressively splendid, just like a scene in some grand Cathedral in Rome that we see paintings of. The Bishop himself married the Duchesse to the man of her choice"——

"*Blessed is He—Bexfield*" again quoted the assistant aloud, in case Mr. Jolly should be near—"to Mons. Vladimir Alexandrowitch von Hammertitszki. I wrote the name down and learnt it by heart. The vicar united in marriage Mr. John Lindsay and the pretty brunette, Henriette D'Annoy, while the curate performed the ceremony which united Herr Flügelbrecher and Miss Gertrude Lindsay."

I was greatly entertained by the senior shop assistant's glowing description of the beautiful picture formed by the three groups at the altar rails, and the solemn effect of the simultaneous marriage services. The floral decorations were superb according to the speaker's statement. A triple arch of flowers and smilax surmounted the altar rails, beneath which the three brides stood respectively. Clusters and festoons of roses and ivy leaves, interspersed with various blooms, turned the chancel into a bower of perfume and beauty.

"After the ceremony," whispered the senior shop assistant in conclusion, "everyone present flocked out to greet the triple bridal party at the church doors and shower them with flowers, instead of the usual silly fusilade of rice, or meaningless confetti. The Duchesse had extended a general invitation to everyone"——

"*How beautiful upon the mountains—Smith,*" said the assistant, loudly, as she continued slowly sorting the anthems—"to attend the festivities at Blue Rock Castle. There was a superb wedding breakfast, feasting and revelry all day long. The newspapers 'spread' themselves over the Duchesse's nuptials in particular, with as much enthusiasm as they would have done had the Queen herself chosen to marry again. Never shall I forget that day—never! if I live to be a hundred!"

I could quite understand the senior shop assistant's enjoyment and enthusiasm, for Blue Rock Castle was one of the most lovely mountain homes imaginable. Moreover, I could well understand how supremely happy the Duchesse must have been under the circumstances. She could not live without *réclame.* She loved being the central figure in any splendid pageant, whether on the stage or off; and to be the cynosure of all eyes at that wonderful triple wedding, and those festivities, made, surely, the most perfect day of happiness in all her extraordinarily successful career.

Pianos, although they have both masculine and feminine instincts, cannot marry or give in marriage. That is a happiness belonging solely to mortals.

But we pianos are sensible of honour and appreciation. Therefore, the crowning triumph of my career was—not marriage, but—when I felt the touch of a sovereign hand upon my keys.

The organ has been called the "King" and the violin

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the "Queen" of musical instruments. I, however, without egotism, may safely assert that I became the "Peer" of pianos when the hand of our Sovereign Empress Queen ennobled me and raised me to the musical peerage.

I shall consequently conclude these memoirs with an account of my happy visit to Windsor, and a gracious act of Her Majesty. I must not forget that I owed this honour, in the first place, to the Duchesse, who, despite her vanity and her enormous self-appreciation, had a truly kind and generous heart.

Now when the *prima donna* realised how deeply Gertrude had suffered through the unjust suspicions entertained against her in the matter of the jewel robbery, she—the Duchesse—had as I have already said, been filled with remorse. Ambitious, vain, and self-seeking musical girls would have been easier to conciliate, but Gertrude possessed superior qualities of heart and mind that made her difficult to deal with.

The Duchesse had, therefore, been at a loss to find a way to atone for the injustice and indignity which had been thrown upon the innocent Gertrude, until the girl herself had come to the rescue by suggesting—somewhat timidly—that her lover, Heinrich Flügelbrecher, should be recommended, by the Duchesse, to Her Majesty's private secretary to play at Windsor. The Duchesse had promptly seized the opportunity of making amends both to Gertrude and her lover by an offer to arrange the auspicious business at once.

Thus it came to pass that I was now about to appear at Windsor, with Herr Flügelbrecher, since he would play on no other instrument but me.

The journey to Windsor Castle from Mr. Jolly's

shop, was like old times. I was conveyed in a passenger train in the charge of Mr. Jolly himself. On my arrival at the Castle, I was immediately placed in the Red Room where the concert was to be given. As the hour for the performance approached, I was much interested in the lords and ladies of the Court, as they passed me to the seats reserved for them. These distinguished personages were followed by the members of the Royal Family. There was a pause.

Then I beheld the Lord Chamberlain, walking backwards, precede Her Majesty the Queen, who slowly entered the room, leaning on her ebony stick, and supported by her Indian attendant.

The memory of that benign face, crowned by its masses of silvery hair, a face at once full of sadness and dignity, will ever abide with me.

When Her Majesty was seated, the Duchesse and Herr Flügelbrecher were conducted into the room by the Master of Ceremonies. The Duchesse made a deep courtesy to the Queen, while Herr Flügelbrecher bowed with an impressive dignity befitting the occasion.

I was indeed proud of my beloved master. Her Majesty addressed a few kind words to the two great artists, and gave the signal for the programme to begin.

Between each number the Queen intimated her gracious desire to speak with the artist, and showed, by the questions asked, that she was deeply interested, and displayed a wide knowledge of musical matters.

Herr Flügelbrecher eclipsed himself on that memorable evening. I felt that he was proud to play on me before the Queen, since there was no trace of nervousness as his fingers swept my keys. The confidence he felt in both himself and me enhanced his brilliant per-

formance. Her Majesty was so delighted with my master's playing, that she had no eyes for the magnificent Duchesse on that occasion. The programme was interrupted, while the Queen called successively for excerpts for piano alone, from Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Beethoven. Happily, the Duchesse did not appear to be at all jealous. She was genuinely pleased with my master's success, and did not begrudge him the triumph he achieved in gaining the Queen's favour so completely. But now came the supreme moment of my life. When the programme was finished, the Queen rose and approached me. My delight can be imagined when I heard her say, in the softest voice in the world, but each word fell from the Royal lips sweetly distinct as she observed to my master:—

"You have played *on the most beautiful instrument* I have ever heard, Herr Flügelbrecher. Its tone is rich, but not overpowering. At the same time its soft qualities are very charming under your brilliant technique."

On hearing those words, I must have wept with joy had I been a human being; but my happiness had not reached its height even yet. I hardly know how to relate what next happened. Her Majesty actually took Herr Flügelbrecher's place at my keyboard. Think of that—*before my keyboard.* Her beautiful hands came in contact with my keys. I have felt the pressure of many fingers, but never have finger-tips stirred up my emotions as did the digits of Her Majesty. And then she played, with an exquisite touch and delicate expression, one of Mendelssohn's "Songs Without Words."

My master listened with deep emotion. He

marvelled, as well he might. The Queen's touch was wonderfully beautiful! How had she gained that touch? Well, well, *entre nous*, I may as well confess it. With all my might I helped Her Majesty to astonish her hearers, and I succeeded. In glorifying a good Queen I glorified myself. Indeed, her graciousness to me was unprecedented. The ladies and gentlemen of the court, and the members of the Royal household, beheld this gracious act of the Queen with surprise and pleasure, and held their breath with astonishment at the beautiful quality of tone Her Majesty brought forth.

When it was over, Herr Flügelbrecher murmured a fitting appreciation; but I, alas! what power had I of human speech, to express the joy I had experienced under the sympathetic touch of that sovereign hand?

THE END.

EPILOGUE

BY PROFESSOR E. PROUT,
Mus. Doc., Dublin.

I've been specially requested to write the Epilogue,
Because some people fancy that I'm a 'funny dog';
They're very much mistaken, but I'll grant that I'm a man
Who tries to be obliging, if he reasonably can.

I also have been asked to point the moral of the story
Of Heinrich Flügelbrecher's grand—its trials and its glory;
But what on earth am I to do with such an 'omnium-gatherum'
As four-and-twenty chapters, with as many scribes to father 'em?

As thus I meditated, and paced my study floor,
I heard a curious lumbering noise from t'other side the door;
I went at once to see the cause—the story in my hand—
And in my hall, as large as life, stood Flügelbrecher's grand.

Then in a strong, melodious voice, said 'A four-thirty-nine,'
"I don't think that your story's case is any worse than mine;
In fact, it's rather better, as far as I can see,
For I'm sure that more than thirty persons had a hand at me.

But I know you love pianos; and I like to help musicians,
(Genuine ones,) who find themselves in difficult positions."
"Walk in, and take a chair!" was my immediate exclamation;
He entered, never waiting for a second invitation.

Down in my easy chair he sat—Alas! for its sad fate!—
The piece of furniture collapsed beneath his heavy weight.
Then (very *pianissimo*,) I thought I heard him swear,
And mutter, "What the dickens is the good of such a chair?"

Then he got up and rubbed his back, and said "I'd rather stand;
It's evident your chair was not intended for a *grand*;

But tell me what your trouble is, and what your cause of worry."
Said I, "It's difficult to find the moral of your story."

"Moral be blowed!" he coarsely said; "don't trouble about that;
When a man begins to moralize, you don't know what he's at;
Write something that will be of use, if you'll take my advice,
And I fancy we can polish off the business in a trice.

"Some think pianos are no more than various woods and metals,
And when we're old, they call us most contemptuously, 'tin-kettles';
But a good piano has a soul, if people did but know,
And I often wonder, when they die, where good pianos go.

"As to the shoddy ones, we know their end is to be burned,
And that's about the fittest use to which they could be turned:
But such a splendid grand as I, although we don't know what
Must surely have some nobler future than to boil a pot.

"But this is a digression—merely idle speculation;
Though perhaps the subject may deserve further investigation;
Now let us give some useful hints, for the sake of those who learn,
And try if we can do the young musician a good turn.

"A man called Robert Schumann wrote 'Advice to young Musicians,'
But I fancy that was written under different conditions;
Anyhow, I see no reason why I shouldn't give some more,
For of useful knowledge one can hardly have too great a store.

"My first hint—one that I cannot insist upon too much—
Is, to be most particular in the matter of the touch;
This is a point requiring a great amount of care,
Because far more depends on it than many are aware.

"If you wish to get a *forte*, never employ brute force,
For if you do, the tone produced with certainly be coarse;
I've had fellows playing on me who hit me such a whack,
It has sent a shiver through me from my pedals to my back.

"But coax my ivories lovingly, if you want to hear me sing;
And you will draw sweet music from each responsive string;
Like some young ladies I have known I don't mind being
squeezed,
And, if it's done judiciously, I'm generally pleased.

"Another point occurs to me—be careful how you meddle
With that often ill-used mechanism, my *una corda* Pedal;
If you can't obtain a proper *pianissimo* without it,
You're but a third-rate pianist; there's not a doubt about it.

"As for your choice of music, the chief thing I would say
Is, if you love your instrument, be careful what you play;
Never forget that every good piano loves good music.
(I've had such rubbish played on me as really would make
you sick.)

"That Schumann that I spoke about has very wisely said,
'Let Bach's Well-tempered Clavier become your daily bread'
But Bach is not the only one that you should take a pride in
There's Weber and Beethoven, Schubert, Mozart and Haydn

"Among the older masters, too, you'll find that there are
plenty
Who are far too much neglected, such as Dussek and Clementi
In my younger days I've had played on me many a sonata
Which if you gave to a pupil now, she'd think herself a martyr.

"The rage is all for modern stuff, such as the works of Liszt;
(Some of that man's extensions need an enormous fist.)
Then there's Chopin, Grieg, and Heller, Henselt, Rubinstein
and Raff,
And a lot of other men, of whom I don't remember half."

"Confound him!" said I to myself, "he'll keep me here all
day!"
But to him I said politely, "I have to go away;
I thank you for your courteous help." And even as I spoke
My daughter called me down to tea, and from my dream I
woke.

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